THE REBIRTH OF FRENCH POETRY, BY ANDRE GIDE

THE Saturday Review OF LITERATURE

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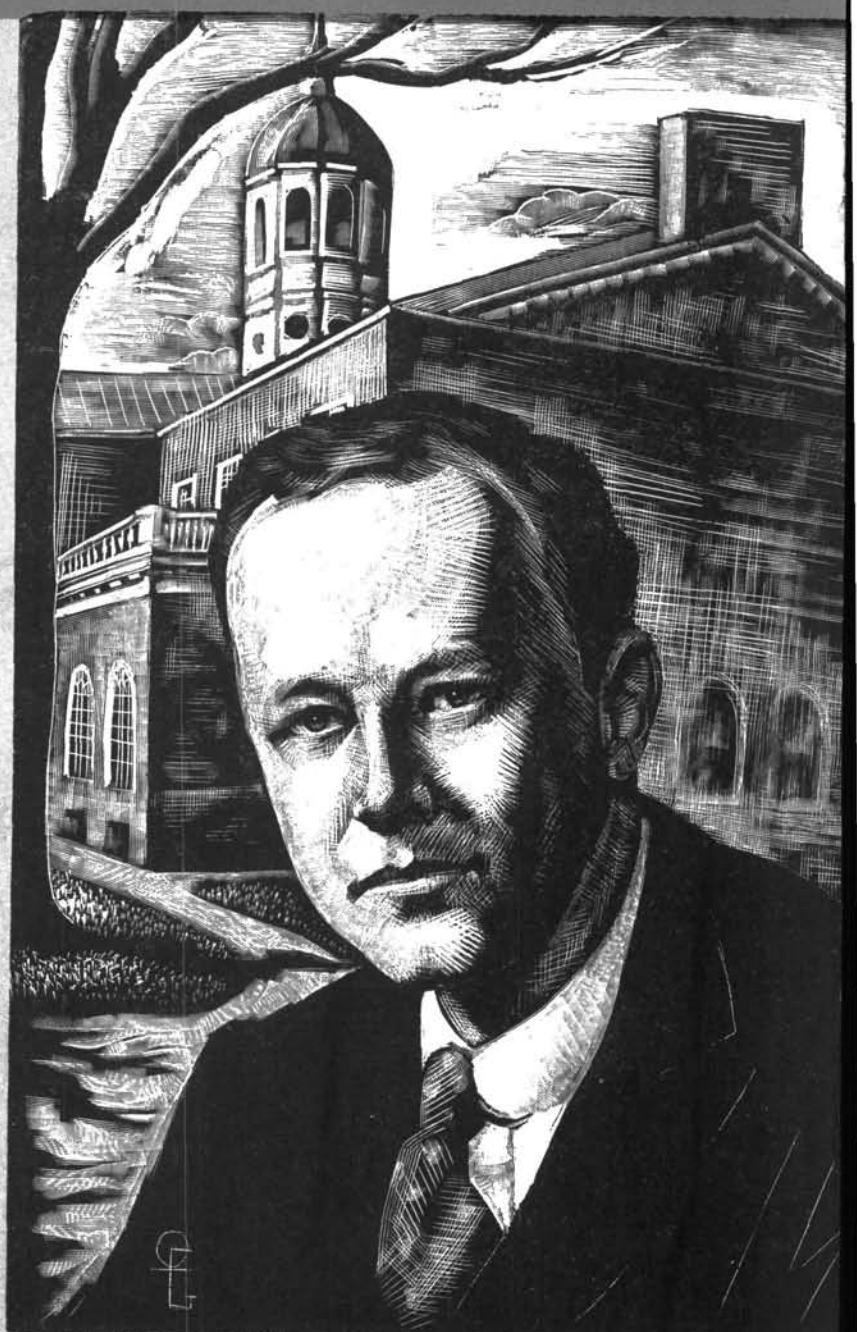

—SRL Wood Engraving by Frances O'Brien Garfield
THEODORE SPENCER, one of the lights of Harvard, has moved from prestidigitation to reflection. (See page 26)

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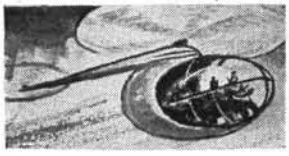

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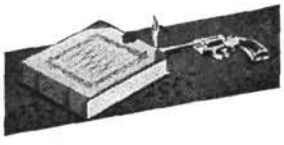

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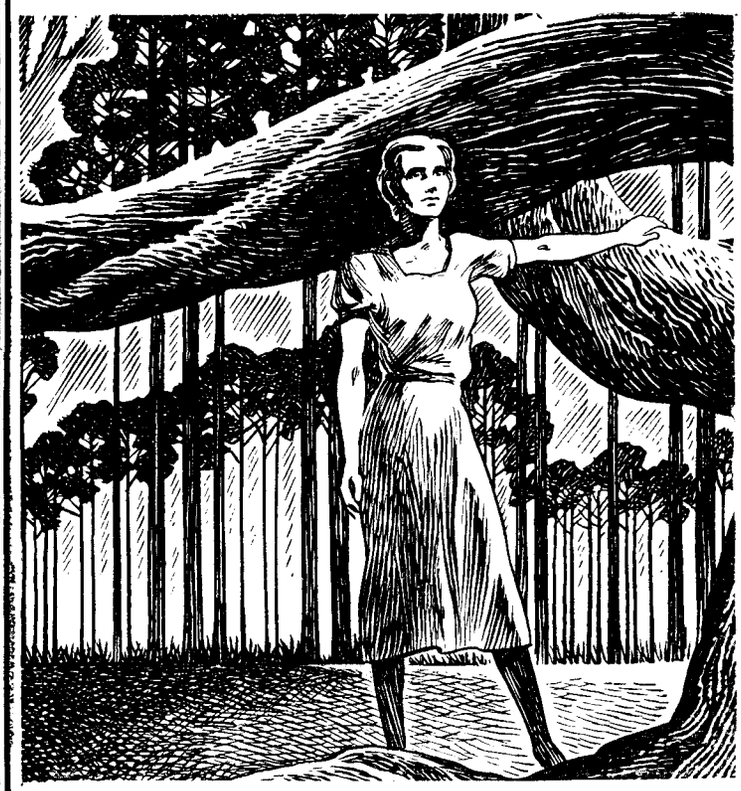

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The Rebirth of French Poetry

An Imaginary Interview

ANDRÉ GIDE

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The following article comes to* The Saturday Review *through the good offices of Malcolm Cowley, translator of Mr. Gide's "Interviews Imaginaires," to be published late this year by Alfred A. Knopf. In a note to the editors, accompanying the article, Mr. Cowley writes:*

"It was a curious sequal to the French defeat that more poetry should be written during the next two years than at any other recent period in French history. New poets appeared on every hand, while older poets, like Paul Eluard, displayed an unexpected gift for speaking directly to the people. Still others, who had been writing nothing but prose for many years, suddenly revealed that their poetic talents had ripened; that was the case with Louis Aragon, whose wartime ballads were circulated in mimeographed copies and gained a popularity almost like that of Victor Hugo. There was indeed a general demand for poetry on the part of the French public, which to some extent was seeking a refuge from defeat, but which was also affirming its belief in the future of French culture. Another reason for the rebirth of French poetry is one that André Gide, for obvious reasons, was unable to mention in the article that follows. Poets found they had more freedom of speech than prose writers; they could say almost anything in their special language and the German censors couldn't understand them; but the French public knew what they meant.

"This imaginary conversation of André Gide, now the greatest living French writer, with an interviewer who didn't exist, is one of several that appeared in Figaro, *which was being published in the so-called Free Zone. That was before Gide went to Africa, where he was liberated when the Allies entered Tunis. The French text of his 'Interviews Imaginaires' is published in New York by Jacques Schiffrin."*

I WAS working when the interviewer came in. "Is it still that introduction to Goethe's dramatic works?" he said.

"It might turn out to be disappointing," I told him. "I have been reading Goethe ever since I was twenty, but it is hard for me to write a proper introduction without referring to books that aren't to be found outside of Paris. André Billy was right to complain about the poverty of our French provincial bookshops. Lacking the texts, I shall have to confine myself to generalities and to what I can remember from my reading. After all, it may be better for the essayist, as it is for the novelist, not to work directly from the facts, but rather to let them be sifted through our memories, which retain only the essentials. This at any rate is what I say to keep myself from losing heart, while knowing all the time that the facts in themselves are unique and irreplaceable. But here as elsewhere, and always, we have to play with the cards in our hands.

"The lack of books," I continued, "will be a more serious drawback when I try to complete the anthology on which I have been working these many years; for that will require the poems themselves."

HE: Other anthologies have recently been published, and their favorable reception by the public confirms the prediction you made when answering a questionnaire. You said, if I remember correctly, that we might expect a rebirth of lyric poetry. Collections of verse are springing up on all sides, and the public, for the first time, has seized on them greedily.

GIDE: It would see that poetry has become a refuge.

HE: Let us hope that the new anthologies edited by Thierry-Maulnier, by Marcel Arland, and by Jean Prévost, haven't caused you to abandon your own project?

GIDE: Mine won't resemble them in the least; it will be the answer to very different needs. I am sure that all three books you mentioned are extremely well edited, although I have seen only the first two; but I have to confess that both of them left me unsatisfied. Like most of the earlier anthologies, they have apparently taken it upon themselves to justify the reputation we have gained in foreign countries, that of allowing our Parnassus to be invaded by orators: where you hoped for music, instead you find logic and eloquence. Thierry-Maulnier's anthology displays an excessively personal judgment, which helps to explain the great interest aroused by his book; it is a profession of faith. In his introduction he reveals a lamentable zeal and the blind ferocity of a partisan; he expresses himself by what he condemns. While overpraising the poets he admires, he is content to give paltry and fallacious reasons for dismissing the others. Very often he makes me feel that, in spite of everything he says, those reasons are essentially political (I am using the word in its broadest sense), just as in other cases they are essentially religious. If we hope to enjoy poetry, we must for a time abandon all such considerations; the reader should approach it with an open mind. That is one reason why, in these days, it can have such a tonic effect.

—*Howard Thomas*

HE: Speaking of your own anthology, might I ask what principles will govern your choice of poems?

GIDE: They will be explained in a preface. But properly speaking they can't be called principles at all. Let us say that I shall try not to lay too much emphasis on my personal taste and that I shan't yield to such momentary and unwise reactions as the one that caused Thierry-Maulnier to overlook Chénier and Moréas and Verlaine, while perching Maynard "at a lyric height that Lemartine and Hugo never dreamed of reaching," and omitting all but a few lines of Hugo in order to find more space for Gérard de Nerval. Most assuredly he was right to restore Nerval and Maurice

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Scève[1] to their proper places, considering that both men have suffered from a prolonged and unjustified neglect. But, to judge by the tendencies of certain critics, it is Hugo himself, that master of lyricism, the greatest in our pantheon, who is becoming a neglected poet. Do they think that the few poems by Hugo still grudgingly quoted in the school books or in recent anthologies are enough even to suggest the resources of his inexhaustible genius? "It was purely a verbal genius," so we are told. What a preposterous notion! And how silly to speak of Hugo's "stupidity." He proved his intelligence by never allowing his verse to be overburdened with or crippled by ideas. Everything is subordinated to the plenitude of his verse; even his emotion, which I cannot say is always very sincere; it is as if he had seized upon and applied to himself Diderot's paradox about the actor: that his task is not to be moved by emotion, but to move others. Or perhaps we should say that the emotion comes first, inspiring the verse; then a moment later the verse itself is exalting and inflating the emotion. But what verse! One might say that the rhymes, those wild birds (and there were some rhymes he disdained to use because they had been too long domesticated), gathered from the four corners of the horizon to seize the crumbs of intellectual nourishment that he held out to them; in the same way, we sometimes see a flock of sparrows or pigeons fluttering round a bird tamer in our public gardens. I concede that there are some of his enormous poems from which whole sections crumble, being built of lath and plaster; but even so there are jewels among the ruins. It is a pleasure to look for them, and I have almost never done so without finding some reward. Listen: in one of the worst, the most painful sections of the bewildering "Mouth of Shadow," there suddenly gleams this extraordinary line:

Il descend, réveillé, l'autre côte du rêve.

—"He wakens and descends the other slope of dream"; it is a verse so pregnant with such a brilliant image, so eloquent of intermingled thought and emotion, that you would seek vainly for its equal elsewhere than in Hugo. I agree that when the colossus wants to "play the man" (in the same sense that Pascal said "play the angel" or "play the beast") and tries to present himself simply as a lover, a father, or a grandfather, he is often at his worst. It is your privilege, moreover, to prefer the human to the gigantesque. But instead of demanding qualities from people that we could easily find elsewhere, should we not take them for what they are: the titans for titans, the dwarfs for dwarfs, and the pedants who attack Hugo for fools? The other day you and I were talking about the bad French sometimes written by great authors. You will never find Hugo writing incorrectly or falling into grammatical errors, faulty syntax, weakness of vocabulary, or simple awkwardness. He is never halted or hindered by the difficulties of French prosody or the language in general; he hurdles each obstacle and transforms each grammatical rule into a springboard. . . . Why did you let me talk so long?

HE: I was listening. But if you have finished your tribute to Hugo, I am curious to know why you once said, when asked who was the greatest French poet, "Hugo, alas!"

GIDE: I would say it again. However great my admiration for Hugo, I am ill at ease with his bombast, feeling as I do that it is always artificial, that it rhymes with nothing; or rather, that it does nothing else but rhyme. His thoughts seem to drift at the mercy of his verse, as if on a mountain torrent; and they make me wish for more rigor and authenticity. You understand, of course, that I am speaking of Hugo only as a lyric poet, being little concerned with his novels and even less with his dramas, now that we have ceased to be imposed upon by their flagrant artifice. Moreover, if we reserve a place apart for his "Things Seen" (and for everything else of his that might have been published under the same title), in which he shows himself to be a marvellous reporter, we find elsewhere that often, all too often,

Ses yeux plongent plus loin que le monde réel.

—"his eyes see a world that never was." But let him only deal with the real world and he is able, when he so desires, to see and depict it admirably. I might add that he is a master of invective.

HE: If Hugo came back to earth, he would doubtless be astonished to learn that his vast output is being balanced against Baudelaire's one book of verse, and that many of our best critics, abroad as in France, have chosen to praise the latter.

GIDE: I, too, should vote for Baudelaire; but only after having saluted Hugo, the enormous, with an enormous bow.

My interviewer took these last words for a hint and rose to go.

II.

"Do you know how many there are?" he asked me on his next visit without waiting to catch his breath.

GIDE: How many what?

HE: French poets writing today, if you please. According to a recent article in the *Cahiers de la Jeune France,* André Billy was astonished to find that there were no less than a hundred. But Henri de Lescoët offered to show Billy a more inclusive list, one that cites the names of "exactly two hundred poet-poets, known and living."

GIDE: Known?

HE: Known to him, in any case.

GIDE: Merciful heavens! Did you say two hundred? We didn't ask for so many.

HE: If you don't call that a renaissance.

GIDE: Putting to one side a score or more of those we could name, who belong to the declining generation and are ready to surrender their places, besides at least a dozen of the newer poets who have been able to gain our attention, I should guess that the greater part of the poet-poets in this admirable list are still under thirty.

HE: I should hope so. They are the "future vigor" of which Rimbaud spoke.

GIDE: And that leads me on to another remark. If somebody had made a similar list in the year 1900, it would not only have been much short-

—*H. Glintenkamp*

[1]Maynard and Scève are typical in their different fashions of the poets who were being exalted in 1941 by the French traditionalists. Maurice Scève (1510?-1564?) was a learned alderman of Lyons and the leader of a flourishing school of poets there. At his rare best he suggests John Donne, but he wrote in an alembicated style and, until recently, his work was read only by scholars. François Maynard (1582-1646) was one of the "Grammarians" who followed Malherbe. This master said of him that, among all his disciples, Maynard was the one who wrote the best verse, but that there was little vigor in his work.—Tr.

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ter, but it would have omitted the names of Claudel and Péguy, who hadn't yet given us any poem-poems, not to mention that of Paul Valéry, who, after some youthful verses, had chosen to subside into a prolonged silence. And yet in 1900, all three of these poets had reached or passed their thirtieth year.

HE: What are you driving at?

GIDE: Why, simply at this: that the most important poet living today, the poet who will be discussed tomorrow and honored by younger poets as a worthy link in a memorable chain —that perhaps he is not even mentioned in this list, being still hidden in the shadows where fate holds him in reserve. It is a great and rare virtue to be patient, to wait and ripen, to correct oneself, to begin over again, and, as the apostle said, to strive toward perfection. But the desire for perfection is being lost, and more's the pity. It was a real French quality.

At this my interviewer made a rather ingenious remark and one, I confess, that surprised me as coming from him.

HE: These are times when the desire for the perfect seems to have taken refuge in the world of mechanical instruments, where perfection can be measured by utility and the rate of production. In the realm of art, on the other hand, there are no fixed standards.

GIDE: Yes, in painting and poetry, in everything personal, the artist and the public are satisfied today with hasty affirmations and sometimes with mere daubs. At times this tendency seems to reveal a certain love for the formless. There is no question today of masterpieces; the word itself sounds a little absurd. There is no question of permanence; all bets are being placed on the moment.

HE: Mightn't it be that our future seems too uncertain?

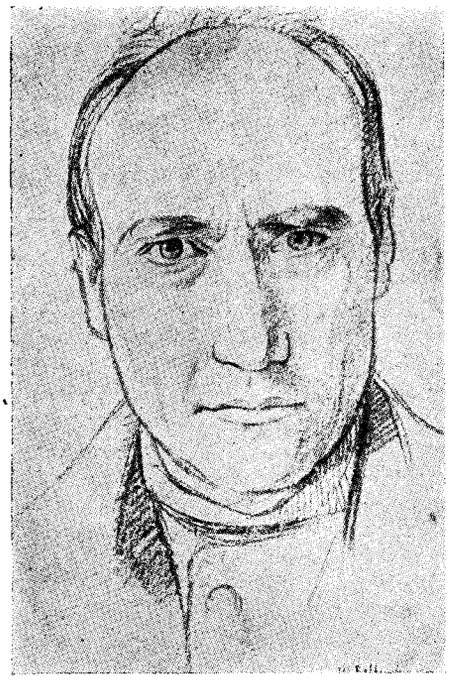
GIDE: The masters chosen by young writers today are those whose genius poured over its banks like a flooded river. It is the absence of dikes that fascinates their disciples; hence a certain contempt for restraint, for effort. They let themselves go and call it genius. Talent has to be acquired, but nobody bothers to acquire it.

HE: I'm not quite sure of whom you are speaking.

GIDE: Neither am I.

As I had nothing more to say at the moment, the interviewer resumed the discussion.

HE: This striving for perfection, which you said was such a French quality, has often been reckoned against us by less cultivated nations, by more impulsive and simple-minded peoples. They regard it as evidence of



André Gide, from the portrait by Sir William Rothenstein.

arrested growth and a yearning for the past; for they say that nothing can be perfected unless it has ceased to grow and that whatever is developing cannot be fixed or polished.

GIDE: Let us rather say that whatever is fixed in its place to be perfected thereby ceases to develop. Yes, I can repeat all those maxims and I have learned to distinguish, even in the twanging of rude and ill-tuned lyres, an effort toward new harmonies not yet reduced to a system. There is no renaissance that doesn't begin by bursting its husk, like a ripening seed. Yesterday's perfection must be shattered for tomorrow's harvest. . . . After a brief search, I could perhaps find less hackneyed metaphors. I might play on the two senses of the word "finished."

HE: You like to play on words.

GIDE: Indeed yes, for that is how they reveal their wealth of meaning. But you interrupted me when I still wanted to point out that. . . . Oh, yes, it was about a line from André Chénier:

Sur des pensers nouveaux faisons des vers antiques.

—"With newborn thoughts let us make ancient verse"; I wanted to say that, in spite of this precept, newborn thoughts don't enter the temple of Art in borrowed raiment. The point of perfection is reached only when the novelty of the form corresponds exactly to the inner novelty. Now, we are all too much inclined in such cases to remain insensible to both novelties; whereas we are disposed to regard as perfect a form that we *recognize,* even when this "old bottle" is not the proper receptacle for the "new wine" it contains. We don't hesitate to dismiss as formless an entirely new style, a quite unprecedented form (whether it is assumed by a poem, a sonata, or a picture), even when the form is rendered inevitable by the novelty of its content, from which it cannot be separated and with which it is indissolubly mingled. For we are blundering into an old and absurd quarrel when we try to consider "form" apart from "matter"; the truth is that they are, or should be, the same thing. The poetic renaissance will either create new forms or it will not exist. Every true artist creates his proper form, just as a mollusc secretes its own armor. May Apollo guard our Parnassus from the hermit crabs of art that live in borrowed shells!

At this the interviewer timidly reminded me that nevertheless the sonnet—to mention one form among others—had not been invented by Shakespeare any more than by Ronsard, Michael Angelo, or Petrarch; and that for a long time afterwards a multitude of poets, including the greatest and the best, in their several countries, had been able to pour their genius into this conventional mold.

His remark was so pertinent that my thoughts, deserting the position they had taken, at once began to move in this new direction. It suddenly seemed clear to me that, if there were no names in the history of art except those belonging to the creators of new forms, there would be no more culture; the very word implied a continuity, and therefore disciples, imitators, followers to make a living chain: in other words, a tradition. I felt nonplussed and, fearing to reveal my confusion, alleged a sudden fatigue. As for a question he had asked during one of our previous interviews, on the subject of popular poetry, I needed more time to think it over. I asked him to come back another day.

After he was gone, I sat there deep in thought. Yes, going back to our discussion and to what I had said about the need for greater ripeness, I meditated for a long time on the younger writers who are now holding their peace and allowing their thoughts and their qualities of heart to be fortified little by little in solitude and silence. And I felt a prayer rising from my heart to my lips, an uncertain and trembling prayer: "Have patience for yet a little while. Future values of France, your hour will come"—an ardent prayer for those who will speak out when perhaps I shall not be there to listen. I shall no longer be able to hear you, and still it is for you I am waiting.

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The Three Periods of Louis Aragon

LE CRÈVE-COEUR. By Louis Aragon. New York: Maison des Editions Françaises. 1943. 64 *pp.* $2.

LES YEUX D'ELSA. By Louis Aragon. New York: The same. 1943. 83 *pp.* $2.

Reviewed by PAUL ROSENFELD

TO date, the career of the conspicuous and skilful French writer Louis Aragon resembles that of Beethoven in one respect. It has fallen into three distinct periods. What distinguishes it from Beethoven's, however, is this circumstance, in combination with one or two others: during each of his periods Aragon has espoused a different "esthetic" and vociferously championed another political philosophy.

Under the influence of Guillaume Apollinaire, on the morrow of World War I he began as one of the leaders of the young surrealist movement. During a decade he reached for a modern mythology; composed brilliantly imaginative, capriciously philosophic stories in free and elegant prose; produced one of the exquisite surrealist booklets, "Le Paysan de Paris." It carries Apollinaire's type of loitering urban experience wittily towards the borderlines of reality. The championed political philosophy in this period was anarchism.

Came 1930. Aragon swung far leftwards, into the ranks of the Communist Party. He edited the revolutionary daily *Ce Soir* and demanded that literature drop its proccupation with the subconscious and revert to "realism." By realism he appeared to mean a representation of the forces of real life in faithfulness to nature. But his representative piece in this period, "The Bells of Basle," made one feel the object actually present to his mind was journalism. Mobilized in 1939, Aragon was placed in an exposed army sector, but escaped at Dunkirk. His voice now was regularly heard on the Vichy radio, broadcasting to the strains of the Marseillaise. During the past year the present brace of poetic volumes—reprints of opuscules issued in France and confiscated by the Germans—have revealed the new literary taste paired with his new politics. It is a relish for the form of the *chanson,* the often disjointed grammatical popular ballad or music-hall ditty prized and emulated by Laforgue and Apollinaire; and a passion for rhyming, of a kind that has contributed to bringing his new work close to Rostand's.

Not since that seven-day wonder of the late 1890's, the versification of "Cyrano de Bergerac," have there indeed emerged from France more spectacular instances of rhyming than "What Breaks the Heart" and "The Eyes of Elsa." Aragon's verses only apply the interior-rhyme schemes of the romantics so systematically that certain of his four-line alexandrines contrapuntally compose six-line octosyllabics. Glitteringly they apply Apollinaire's new concept of masculine and feminine rhymes—in accordance with which all rhymes terminating in a sounded consonant are feminine, and all which terminate in a vowel or a nasal tone, masculine. Moreover Aragon has introduced enjambments not only of phrases and words but of rhymes, and extensively used complex rhymes—those created by the decomposition of the rhymed sound among several words. In a single stanza, for example, he provides three such complex correspondences for the sound of the name Ourcq.

It is his theory that rhyme is the characteristic element of French poetry; that it is "the introductress of new things into the high old language —called poetry"; and that the very successes of his rhyming predecessors oblige him to innovate. To what degree his innovations are original, we cannot say. We seem to have encountered similar phenomena in some French "fantasist" poetry and the poems of other surrealists. This, however, is certain: the upshot is little more poetic than are the scintillantly rhymed verses of "Cyrano." It, too, is a triumph of pyrotechnics. The deep-sprung, inevitable word constantly is wanting, and Aragon's music is quite ordinary. So, too, is the total play of his imagination. One finds it impossible to see distinction in the lines, say, which Gide pretends to admire: where the poet, in the arms of his wife, hearing an old song of France, says *"son refrain comme un pied nu/Troubla l'eau verte du silence."*

Despite the approximation to Rostand, or possibly because of it, both little volumes of verse have had a success in England, and "Le Crève-Coeur" in America. Doubtless it is Aragon's themes that mainly have created the welcome. They are the emotions of the present war: of the soldier separated from his wife and returned to the shambles after twenty years; the feeling of defeat, and shame, anguish, and despair for France; the waking nightmare of the unoccupied zone; and yearnings for a new crusade, for freedom. The pervasive nostalgia for the past doubtless also has appealed. The writer has saluted his prostrate land in the images of historic women: Eleanor of Aquitaine, Louïze Labé, Vittoria Colonna. The nostalgia has extended itself to past French poetry. Not only are certain verses entitled "Les Nuits" and others "Fêtes Galantes." There are deliberate echoes of lines by Musset, Baudelaire, and Verlaine; and particularly in "Les Yeux d'Elsa," repetitions of sundry old forms. Aragon has become aware of the tremendous degree to which the idea of any nation is concentrated in the expressions of its poets. The greater the pity that as a whole his own new expression is not more discriminating.

Australia: First Impression

By Cpl. Hargis Westerfield

WE have come at last in the long sunstruck afternoon
To a land of summer in January, sweating under heavy packs,
To a bare yellow blazing land of long afternoons.
Surly, we slipped out of the sweaty pack harness:
How can a man live in this blazing land, water bitter with heat?
(And today, the chill of the snow in the waters of Indiana)
Through the mosquito net, fearing malaria,
We have watched the Southern Cross, star-mists of
Magellanic clouds, even the skies too far from home:
We have said, remembering the train through the sudden great cities,
The waving handkerchiefs: This is the slouch-hatted land,
Australia, the few tanned bare-legged fighters; and
Up North is the land for brave men and beach-heads; and
We have chatted with lads back to the lines again
Men with minds only for the girls they had in Melbourne;
We have talked respectfully to leisurely lads washing their shirts,
Homesick, hearing the slow American drawl of Southern men,
Negro and white, the quiet men who have killed. . . .

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TO THE NORTH:
A Wall Against Canadian Poetry

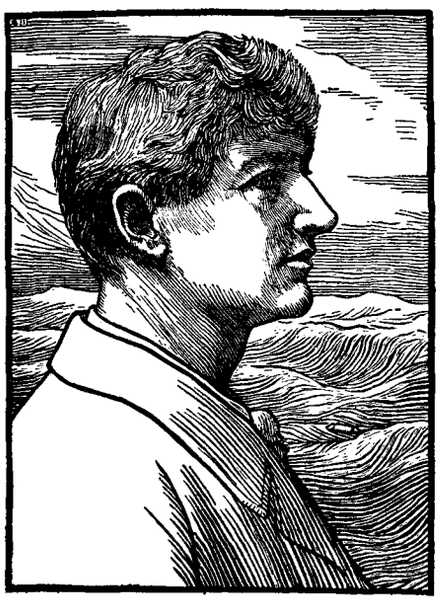
E. K. BROWN

IN the summer of 1940 Mr. George Dillon asked me to collect and introduce a Canadian number of *Poetry*. When this appeared in the following April it was accompanied by a terminal note in which the editors explained why they had conceived the project: Canadian poets were not "discovered" by American readers as poets from England and the continent were; they did not readily find American publishers; they did not make their way into textbooks and anthologies. Some special effort to make them known in this country was called for. Mr. Dillon was the first of many to make such an effort. In 1942 Mr. Ralph Gustafson, a young Canadian poet and critic living in New York, brought out an "Anthology of Canadian Poetry" in the Pelican Library, which has circulated widely in America as well as in Britain. In the following year he edited two smaller anthologies, a Canadian number of *Voices* and, for New Directions, "A Little Book of Canadian Poets." Meanwhile another young Canadian poet and critic also living in this country, Professor A. J. M. Smith of Michigan State College, used his period as a Guggenheim fellow to complete his "Book of Canadian Poetry." I am not at one with Mr. Smith in all his judgments, but I do not think anyone can doubt that in the four hundred and fifty pages of his anthology, chosen with a poet's sensitiveness and representing Canadian poetry from the beginnings to pieces that were still in the drawers of gifted novices, the range and power of this poetry was clearly shown.

And yet the wall that prevents Canadian poetry from becoming known in this country still stands high and firm. In the same issue of *The New Republic* which dismissed Mr. Smith's book with a pleasant pat on the back (in the form of a brief notice written out of good-natured ignorance) there was a careful column-long review of a recent anthology of translations from Latin American verse. I have yet to see in an American periodical an adequate review of the two important books of Canadian poetry published in 1943, Mr. Smith's "News of the Phoenix" and Mr. E. J. Pratt's "Still Life."

The wall is a new erection, at least it is much higher and firmer than it used to be. In the last twenty years of the nineteenth century the best of the Canadian poets appeared regularly in the best of the American magazines. Archibald Lampman, who lived in Ottawa as a civil servant from 1883 to his death in 1899, and had practically no literary connections with this country, had five poems in the *Atlantic*, eight in *Harper's*, and twenty-five in *Scribner's*. Bliss Carman and Charles G. D. Roberts, who lived in New York for years, did better.

I cannot say why the wall should be there now, but I should like to see



Bliss Carman

it blown up, and here I should like to suggest what lies behind it today.

There is the extensive work, the twelve volumes, of E. J. Pratt. Mr. Pratt is over sixty. Born in a Newfoundland fishing village, he came inland to Toronto when he was in his middle twenties; after studying theology, philosophy, and finally psychology, he taught the last named of these subjects at the University of Toronto until 1919, when, deeply dissatisfied with abstract thought of any kind, he removed to the department of English, and began to put together his first collection of poems, "A Book of Newfoundland Verse." This came out in 1923, and by 1926, with the appearance of "Titans," he was recognized in Canada as the most original and variously gifted of the newer poets. Eighteen years later he is not even a name in this country; nothing of his had come out in *Poetry* before the Canadian number of 1941; I have never seen a poem of his in any of the larger American magazines; he is represented in none of the anthologies. And yet he is a poet in whose work it is easy to take pleasure, and the pleasure he can give is rather different from what can be found anywhere else. Mr. Pratt's revulsion against the terms of social life in our time has led him to scholarly but also ruggedly vigorous evocations of the prehistoric world, to narratives of the sea in which learning, humor, and emotional intensity mix in a wild and powerful amalgam, to epic reconstructions of the Canadian past, to meditative lyrics in which force and a certain essential aloofness and unexpected coolness work together to shape a unique mood and texture. I should like to mention the response of one of the most eminent American academic men of letters to the reading of one of the meditative lyrics, "Silences": "This is a man to whom one would go on pilgrimage."

Technically Mr. Pratt is always interesting. He has devised a bounding, resonant tetrameter which is all his own, he has found a grave, slow-moving kind of blank verse perfect for epic, and his use of the polysyllable is a miracle of deftness. The unique texture of his verse depends on a startlingly original temperament, and also, perhaps, on the order in which the main layers of his experience have come. First there was the contact with exciting and spectacular crude realities in Moreton Harbor, where as a youth he used to row around the whales that had been dragged home and moored in the bay; then there were the fifteen years of abstraction, with the amassing of heaps of theories and terms about God, the universe, and man; then came the discoveries in elder authors, particularly in the English Renaissance; and much later the sympathetic explorations in recent verse techniques. I have no hesitation in saying that this poetry of Pratt's is a bigger thing than Robinson's or Masefield's ever was, that it offers something comparable with what you can get from Jeffers. Next fall his collected poems will appear in Toronto.

I THINK that Mr. Pratt's work is the most startling single thing now concealed behind the northern wall. But there is a vast variety of excellence. In the period from 1900 to 1920 there were two notable achievements, Marjorie Pickthall's and Dr. Duncan Campbell Scott's. Marjorie Pickthall was in her late thirties when she died in 1922. She is a delicate poet, of the kind that writes line by scrupulous line, pausing to reconsider each detail with eye and ear. At her best she could do a moving and beautiful dramatic monologue, or a nature lyric exquisitely fine. I do

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If You See My Face You Will Know I Am at Home

By Horace Gregory

COME back, come back.
Shall I come back as Odysseus,
The man who out-tricked rivals in the war,
Who drifted home at night, wild-bearded and tanned,
Body in rags?
Was it a stranger
Who stood among strangers in the fiery hall
Until the laughter died, until blood flowed
And the male harlots fled?
The masque was over
And the dance was done
And a single torch lit the passage-way to bed.
Then came the low voice (even its whisper conquered peace)
Entering the house at last, its presence known,
Earth and salt-water free, to smile, to rest,
Encircling the grave Penelope,
Its echo welcomed by the white-haired father,
Its command obeyed by the fair and quick-limbed son.

Or shall I return as the glittering, misspent,
Star-crested Antony, eager and hot from Rome,
Lover of Egypt's lady,
Clasping each girl as though each queen were Venus
And he were Jove:
As though he were a swan, a bull, or six Amphitryons,
Or a shaft of golden moonlight through the roof,
His voice the music of a million coins?
Here for an hour, gone for a week, a month, a year,
Never at ease with men, never to sleep at home,
Never the same, but always Antony,
Yet wherever he wandered, there the great world entered
And the throbbings of wings were heard
In a small room.

Or do you wish to see me dressed as General Sherman
In gilded bronze?
Remembered because he said the place he traveled
Was not called Heaven,
But was forced marching miles through swamps,
Through sun and rain;
Behind him smoking towns, embers and ashes
And beyond death,
Horse, rider, Victory (the woman with a wreath)
Staring through city traffic, shop buildings, churches
Marveled at by week-end lovers from out of town.
If this was fame, what does it mean?
Hero or anti-hero,
The false or true glory or loss of glory
Greater than you or I or even Sherman knew?

Come back, come back.

I shall probably drop from a cloud
On a cold, gay New York morning,
Happy to be alive, to bathe, to shave, to think:
Will there be the same talk at the Ritz and the El Morocco,
The same cosmetic tears, the whiskey laughter,
The same women who loved Paris in the spring?
Two oceans and the sky have come between us,
What shall I say?

Perhaps the war has not changed ten million faces,
Perhaps there will be nothing left to do
Except to lie at rest in tall green grasses
Watching noon fade behind the evening star—
Perhaps the street where I walk will be named Nirvana,
But where its end is, on earth or in sea or air,
Something called peace will certainly arrive
Beyond the hope of this world or of our time—
And if I survive, it will not look like Grant's Tomb.

Perhaps you will see through all of my disguises;
The sign may be a comet in the sky
Or a tearing sound at night or an open door.
If the apparition speaks and takes your hand,
Then you will know at last
I am at home.

(*Continued from previous page*)
not know that she ever awakened any response in this country, and yet for me, as for many in Canada, she is one of the best women poets of her time.

Dr. Scott's is a more substantial achievement. His first collection came out in 1893; from that time on he was steadily growing until in 1905, with "New World Lyrics and Ballads," he stood with Carman as the best Canadian poet alive. He has had a great career in the federal department of Indian Affairs which he directed for rather more than ten years before his retirement in the early nineteen-thirties; and the mark of his long imaginative association with his charges is upon much of his surest poetry. His Indian poems are, quite simply, the best I have ever read, vigorous, firm, and always with a suggestion either of the tragic past of the race, or of its pathetic present. In his reflective pieces he has more intellectual weight and precision than Carman, who was so much better known in this country. Indeed in some of his nature poems the depth and intricacy of his thought is so unusual that only now is interpretation beginning to cope adequately with it. Here and there in his collected poems, published in 1926, and in the later volume, "The Green Cloister," are meditative lyrics of admirable fineness and clarity. In all his best work—and he is still adding to it at eighty-one—there is a beautiful fusion of intensity and restraint.

And there are younger poets of high distinction. In the past three years there have been three first collections that I value very highly. Mr. Abraham Klein's "Hath Not a Jew . . ." was published in New York and has been praised in the Jewish press. Mr. Lewisohn (who wrote a preface) found it the best example of authentically Jewish poetry in the English language. It abounds in Talmudic erudition, touched with humor no less genuine for being learned; it has the powerful Coleridgean charm of the strange made to seem natural and familiar; and if the form is sometimes careless there are bursts of sudden splendor in rhythm and image. Then there is Mr. Earle Birney's "David." "David" is a story of a mountain tragedy in which the note of ordinary attitude and action is sternly kept until the close, when the reader is suddenly and surely carried through an emotional experience which is among the most memorable to be had from recent poetry. Finally, just a few months ago, appeared Mr. Smith's "News of the Phoenix," long awaited in Canada, and in perfection of technique undoubtedly the finest first volume since Archibald Lamp-

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man's "Among the Millet" came out in 1888. Mr. Smith has undergone the same influences that went to shape the difficult younger poets in this country. He is their analogue—and their peer. In his work is a distinctive note, the note of a temperament which is, as I have said elsewhere, "proud, hard, noble, and intense."

I am forced to omit so many names that I am oppressed by a sense of committing simultaneously a multitude of acts of injustice. Those I have mentioned are, I think, the greatest, but so rich is the field that choice is deeply embarrassing. And what I am most concerned to do is to suggest the general richness, to urge that Canadian poetry is great and important, that beyond the northern wall there is far more for the American reader than he supposes.

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TO THE SOUTH: Richer Poetry Than We Know

DUDLEY FITTS

As the North American public becomes more and more aware of the actuality of its Latin neighbors to the south, silliness of attitude and prejudice that were prevalent not so many years ago are gradually being altered, or dropped entirely. It is no longer fashionable, except perhaps in the more reactionary circles of Hollywood, to regard daily life beyond the Rio Grande as a kind of comic opera enacted by a cast of endearing but hopelessly unreal masquers. We are beginning to ask ourselves questions about these men and women, and it becomes increasingly difficult to put us off with a tango, a llama or two, or a reference to the quaint ways of the pampas. Our growing interest in Ibero-American literature illustrates this. Ten years ago it was the province of the specialist. Spanish was a high-school snap, and Portuguese something that you could hear spoken down on Cape Cod. Only three names were really well known here: the internationally famous Nicaraguan Rubén Darío, the Chilean poet Gabriela Mistral, and Hugo Wast—the last being an Argentinean pulp-romancer who may be described as a kind of Zane Gray with a powerful admixture of Julius Streicher. Today the picture is much brighter. We have had a glimpse of the scene as it really is, and we want to see more of it. The painter, the musician, and the novelist have naturally commanded the greater part of our attention; but some interest has been shown in the most broadly cultivated of the Latin American arts, poetry; and it is about this that I, as an amateur of the subject, have been asked to write.

I can touch only on two or three of its aspects, for the subject is immense—far greater than "Poetry in the United States" would be. The reason is that this poetry is not only a living art, but an intensely popular art with a native tradition far older and richer than our own. Into this tradition I have no space to go, and I must ask the reader to take my word for it that Latin America has had its Poes and its Whitmans, its Lowells, its Robinsons, its Frosts. If I cannot discuss the giants of the immediate past—Amado Nervo, for instance, and Ramón López Velarde and Guillermo Valencia—I nevertheless would not be understood as belittling their importance or underestimating their influence.

It is convenient to take Darío's death in 1917 as the starting point for our discussion because it marks, in a sense, the end of an era. Darío's influence upon Spanish poetry, in Spain as well as in America, cannot well be exaggerated. It is not too much to say that he remade the tradition. Thanks to him, a tired, stylized manner of writing was revitalized: into it went not only what he had absorbed from the French symbolists, who were his masters, but what was bred in him as a Nicaraguan, an American—an alien essence, in spite of language and training. His *modernismo* was a romantic flowering, rhapsodic in sound and color, rich in texture . . . and easily corruptible, as most purely sensuous art is. But in his case, the degeneration set in during his lifetime: as an artist, Darío was dead long before 1917. The exquisite corpse lay around, however, and it is to the pious endeavor to give it burial that we owe much of what is best in Spanish and Spanish-American poetry today.

—From "Salud! A South American Journal."

It is by now a commonplace of criticism that Darío's personal signature was the Swan—a mystic, lovely, somewhat cloying fowl straight from the garden of Paul Verlaine—and that the rebellion against it was best celebrated, though not begun, by one of the most memorable sonnets in literary history: *Tuércele el cuello al cisne de engañoso plumaje*—"Then twist the neck of this delusive Swan," as the late John Peale Bishop rendered it—by the veteran Mexican poet Enrique González Martínez. Twisting the neck of the Swan means doing away with all mere decoration, with grace for the sake of grace, with everything

> that does not go
> Shifting its beat in secret unison
> With life.

Against the Swan, González Martínez would set the sapient Owl, Athena's bird—graceless, perhaps, but wise, but disturbing, full of that quality which the Spanish untranslatably calls *inquietud*. The revolt succeeded, and most of the really important poets of the last quarter century have fought for the Owl rather than for the Swan.

Not all of them, of course. Leaving aside for the moment the writers who work with folk themes in folk ways—the extreme Indigenists, for example, and the Afro-Antilleans—one still finds poets of power who are still writing in the old swan-struck manner. But even these have not gone untouched by the battle. When contemporary Darionism is good, it invariably displays qualities of intellectualization which would have troubled Rubén himself. I have no space for a comparison of this altered manner and its predecessor, but suggest that anyone interested examine the work of that very accomplished Cuban poet, Eugenio Florit.

Darío's influence, then, whether positive or negative, is apparent in the work of the majority of reputable poets writing today. But other powerful forces have been at work upon this poetry. It has been touched from various sides—from Spain, as one would

(*Continued on page* 30)

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A Selection of War Poetry from

Mourning Is Unfamiliar

By Lt. A. L. Glazer

BANG like a stormcloud slapped the patterned guns,
Saluting this coffin, and a preacher dribbled dust—
"Man returns his gift to almighty God—
Oh spangled standard! It is passing to valiant sons."
Oh dripping standard! All but the rain was discussed.
We anxiously watch that stopless piston rod
His mother, and her prim approving nod.

A ceremonial mockery all wrong:
A quadrille of plaintive cats. Him I delivered,
In rote heroic words sweetening no blow,
To his rock of marble mother indecently strong
Who simpered in her tea while my cup shivered:
Some damnable icewater made the woman go—
She praised a forgotten son who is better so.

She, like the white ball sun that melted the street,
Striking shadows, smoking in the air,
Shooting pins from the fighters overhead,
Indifferent, careless, serene, unreasonable heat,
Made of the afternoon squall a minute affair,
Though a caught flier shattered by its thunderhead
Fell in a flash on the beach and I saw him dead.

My part would be poor and foolish if I could say
Our frightened souls put pity in a trance,
Or bridle and lead it to war, where hate's by the bale
And pity ounces, but I mean to mourn today
For this dead stranger. Our tyrannical comical dance
Insists we do more than breathe and feed and fail,
And my self respect mumbles at that curious veil.

Andrew Glazer, born in Birmingham, Ala., and a graduate of Harvard University, is now a fighter pilot.

Song of Death

WORDS IN MEMORY

By Anne Wood

I CALL you nothing that is not your name. The sea you are
Who sleeps upon night's shore
Your harbor eyes reflecting the slow moon where you lie waking
Between two shadowed stones. Yet in the dreaming of my sleep
Harshly you challenge any crag or prow, battering slime and stone
And with the sound of a voice in a cave lost far and long
My name your thundering tongue recalls, till you are gone again.

I call you foal. I've seen you knock about a field
Daft as a drunkard on an August night, flaunting the peril of the daisy,
Cocking your heels, a clover in your mane.
A dream said you'd grown terrible and black, muscles like hickory knots,
Shattered a hoof in some childish rage against
A board that reeled, split as if the sky had struck it, left my name.

Stalk-of-corn I call you
Treading above the burdock and the rose.
Your yellow eyes are sealed from the world
Your hands are pointing thinly in the wind
And turning, bending in the summer air
Tell my name greenly over the loam.

"... Or Give Me Death!"

By Florence Converse

I

GALLED with the tether that hobbled me,
Starved for freedom, I mocked at Deity,
Wagging my head:
"How can I worship you when you have made me stiff in the knee?"

And God quite unexpectedly said:
"If I cut loose from you, where would you be?"

II

O Abyss! O Nichilitade!
O Vacuum
Invading and dissolving and absorbing!
I tilt, I lurch—I plunge—I am Vertigo,
Somebody hold the leash!

And through my pitching soul's dispersion
Sifted the Word:
"If My fathomless Nothing,
My limitless undifferentiated Naught,
Is Freedom?"

Godhead, the answers all are yours.

III

But what of Freedoms in Columns of Fours?
Eyes right! Regimented?
Policing the Peace—and the discontented?
What of Global Freedoms, invented
For Global Democracy?
All Phantasy?

Wade with me now through these shallows,
Out, out, O Detached!
Drop for me now a plumb-line into the depths,
O Aloof!
Though I fling myself into the Gulf,
How far shall my brief tether probe?
And I the plummet?
O Remote! Immeasurable!
Give me a sounding!
Or is Freedom as simple as letting go?
Or as involved?

Silence: Then the response oblique:
"I am enmeshed in the web of my stars."

IV

Gods may sublimate shackles and bolts and bars,

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O Paradox, but the solvent is still to seek
For men. Is it choosing makes us free?
Choosing the bondage of infamy?
Choosing an uninhibited anarchy?
Choosing the totalitarian's tyranny?
Choosing necessity's no-choice?

Silence: The Voice:
"And have I not made a Man's choice?
For whosoever will save his life shall lose it,
And whosoever will lose his life for my sake
Shall find it.
I am God, I am Man, I am Love.

I bind myself: I am free.
And what I do, ye shall do also:
I lift you up to me.
Say When! Say Whether!"

V

Man's choice, God's choice, Love's choice,
These three,
Are one choice when Love chooses?
O word of Power,
Incarnate Love!
Crucified on your Liberty tree—
Tighten my tether!

Mothers of Sons

By Edith Warner Johnson

MOTHERS of sons gone into battle,
You walk through your empty households dreaming—
While sorrow like a majestic river
Moves deep and wide and quietly gleaming
With light and shadow and memories.
No turbulent anguish or cry redeeming,
Only the soundless water flowing
In its remorseless strange outgoing.

Who can dispel the cloud of dream?
Who can awake the silence again
To footfalls coming across the threshold,
To voices lost like a sweet refrain
Blown as smoke blows across the hills?
Who can allay the hidden pain?
Only the voice of the wind's dark breath:
"Death is life and life is death."

Innumerable Death

By Winfield Townley Scott

I AM these days much distracted by death:
By count of war, innumerable death. I
Am a stranger at too many funerals, and grief
Impersonal as rain that slows the night
That nobody had noticed when it began
Goes on repeating midnight hour by hour, and I
Grow much preoccupied by death, everywhere.

That it is not mine to know, nor mine to die;
I have not died at Stalingrad or home,
Having bequeathed that lie in another life.
Neither is my own death my distraction.
I talked my death to death many years ago in
The sunlight somewhere. I was very young.
What was I saying? Not this general cold rain.

Where there were bones and violets and peace
Death moved in Act the Fifth, the curtain fell,
I rose from him to acknowledge the applause;
Or if he came to the house, there equally known
As one familiar with our ceremonies, often
Seen at the neighbors', with private meaning.
Peace be with violets now, bones and the sun.

I am distracted by this shapeless death that
Has taken all the air, grown out of his name.
Even if he turns upon me my friends' faces
For me to see white in the endless rain,
What shall I call him? Even this autumn now
Loosening out to the long fall of leaves
Darkens for nothing that it ever was.

Airborne

By Raymond Holden

For Aviation Cadet Scudder M. Parker

SET the feet firm on this tossed steel
And stand alined, if so you can,
With gravity through spine and heel
Content in discontent to feel
Earth reaching upward to remind
All the wild motion that is man
Of what it may not leave behind.

To reach the enemy man rides
Vessels of air or sea that stand
Like leaves upon the streamy sides
Of watery winds and cloudy tides
Yet if through some storm's violence
He fall, it must be toward the land
His rest, his point of reference.

To reach his peace he gladly goes
Among the chasms of high air
Willing, because his body knows
From blowing hair to bracing toes
How the earth's engine and his own
At war, contrive to keep him there,
As if he were not kin to stone.

Watch air's horizon for the foe,
The heart's for fear's grave overload.
There are more enemies about
Than flesh alone can hope to rout.
Set the feet firm and stand erect
As if it still were earth you rode,
Man's earth that never yet was wrecked.

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Ode in Time of Preparation

BY ARTHUR COLTON

Arthur Colton (1868-1944) was one of the most promising poets and certainly one of the most distinguished short-story writers of the early nineteen hundreds. "Delectable Mountains" (1901), short stories, and "Harps Hung Up in Babylon" (1907), poems, probably contain his best works. His "Ode in Time of Preparation," with its interesting previews of the spiritual disturbances preceding our entrance into the Second World War, was written for his class reunion at Yale in 1915. It has never been published.

ABOUT our birth and childhood lay
The aftermaths of one great war;
Mere echoes to our ears were they,
And phantoms lingering at the door;
And our hearts beat not as had beat
The hearts of those whose rushing feet
Stormed southward as though death were sweet
When something is worth dying for.
Now over the Atlantic comes the roar
Of a yet mightier tumult, hurrying to compete
With the salt surges and hoarse surfs that pour
Their throng and thunder on the Jersey shore.
Between these rugged peaks of history lies
The narrow valley of our memories.

When to its last unvenerable year
Darkened the gray old century, and the new came in
With annual footsteps and a harkening ear
Half deafened by the discord and the din
Of voices bidding her: Go there! Go here!
Was there no voice definitive,
No organ bass of undertone, to give
This watchword and command
To all the corners of the sloven land:
"Go set your house in order, for the new age comes!
Can you not hear the rolling of its drums?
Nay, even read
The mottoes where the vanguard banners lead?"

"'Oh beautiful, my country?' Yea! But lo!
You were neither wise nor pure.
Now to the portents of these windy skies
Lift the clear candor of those steel blue eyes,
And throw
Your faded maxims to the winds, and know
Democracy a problem, not a cure;
A door thrown open, not a door made sure;
And every ill that face of man has scarred
Will enter at that door, if none stand guard;
Nay, more,
If none go forward from that open door
To wage with eternal wrong the eternal war."

We hide ourselves from our own view.
Was ever a pharisee that knew
Himself a whited sepulchre?
Or lacked his platitudes to blur,
His cloud of current cant to dim,
The face of justice fronting him?
If by our toil and battle and research,
From ancient bigotries and wrongs set free,
We have ceased to see a nation as a church,
And see it as a shop, what thank have we?
What have we done
That's worth a moment's glimmer of the sun?
What have the free sons gained
Who live less nobly than their fathers chained?

I know not what a nation is; I know
It is not made
Of politics or trade;
Nor above all things is its goal
To wax in power or in numbers grow,
But above all things to achieve a soul,
A something to outlive its corporal breath.
A nation's not a business! It's a faith!
A core of living fire, round whose enduring glow
The generations cluster, and its light shines from their eyes.

I know the service I require
From the nation that is mine
Is the service of that fire,
Is to warm me and inspire,
Is to be both hearth and shrine.
The service that a nation owes
Is the aureole round her brows,
Is to guard her consecration,
Is to lift her people's eyes
From the arid contemplation
Of their private destinies.

I know
That the complex of a nation
Is no single generation,
But in the invisible throng
Of yesterday and tomorrow she is strong,
In the strength of men unborn and men dead long
Ago.

Oh may this nation find at length
The soul that sleeps beneath her strength!
Not as a victor only to come back
From the red wrack
Of war and a world in mourning, but unaware
Of her own consecration,
To her people's adoration,
With lips that speaking no lying, and the starlight on her hair.

Life is passed
Saying goodbye to those who go, until at last
The time comes when we say
Goodbye to those who stay.
And those who stay when we are gone,
Shall they not see a larger dawn
Break on the hills than we have seen,
Be better men than we have been,
More pure of heart, more sure of hand,
More clear of brain to understand
The part they have to play
In the great drama of the coming day.

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Toulemonde: Intermezzo

BY CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

HERE is a song (O dry those tears)
In honor of man's Middle Years—
Unmusical, more like a shout;
But what's the yodelling about?
It's *fun* to grow old . . . if the guts hold out.

Steward?—Steward! Another snort
While I make my interim report.
My gums recede, my belly pouts,
I feel mysterious pangs and gouts
And frequent philosophic doubts.
On flights of stairs my heart goes poop,
I pant and palsy when I stoop—
The woes of flesh no man avoids:
If it isn't flu it's hemorrhoids,
But sagged in front or tweaked behind
All the more ecstasy I find
In the employment of the mind.

Still, thank God, are gorgeous days
When thought kindles to a blaze
On some unearned chrysostom phrase,
Or, with equal pleasure, sags
Upon unmentionable gags—
O brothers, savor them while we may—
What *is* Man, think you, by the way?
Crude actor in a noble play
Or supremely skilled performer
In a dull farce like *Fair and Warmer?*

I had my eras, one by one;
Each was dear, each had its fun,
But man must learn, or his name is mud,
To relish the ebb as well as the flood.
Even in all this woe, we guess,
Are growing pains for the U. S.
Global citizens began it
When Men-about-town became Men-about-planet.
Just now, in partisan catalepse,
Rather wavering are our steps
But all depends on the will-to-think—
Steward! Did you forget that drink?
Plain water, if you please; not Schweppe's.

O lovely lonely lucid hours
When thought swings up to its full powers,
When ego, fantailed like a peacock
Can find the needle in the haycock
And hold the needle's eye and thread it—
Is that millennium? You said it!
When body, mind, and mood congrue
Then nuts for totem and taboo:
There may be very pleasant sins
Not far from Where Taboo Begins.
Beyond the simple cokes of youth
Is also wormwood, or vermouth.

I like to see The Boys grow older:
In face deep-lined or threadbare shoulder
Character shows; and in the grain
Fortune, good or bad, comes plain—
Some who couldn't hold the pace,
Some who sank without a trace
By drink or dames; or worked like hacks
Till economics swung the axe.

Such godhead humors are assured
To the reasonably matured;
Such dexterities defensive,
Pleasures brief but so intensive.
We have learned to flee from bores,
Not to eat green apple-cores,
Find mercy in our humble chores
And watch new tides wash up the shores
Where we had spread, in prose or rhyme,
Our blueprints on the sands of Time.

To disregard all Sacred Cows,
Enjoy occasional carouse,
To know where food and drink agree,
To bid the prude go climb a tree;
Be slow in matters controversial,
Turn off the radio commercial,
Shun grand opera like the pox,
Be dubious of the ballot box,
Defer a little, if we can,
The Century of the Common Man
When everything we most revere
Will get less honor year by year.

And so, oldtimers, you and you
Who drudge these middle decades through
(Often without enough support
Since shirt-tails have been cut so short)
Who've raised our kids and paid our tax
And mumbled our rebellious cracks,
We often Took It on the snout.
But also we could Give It Out.
We played our numbers in life's bingo
And, in contemporary lingo
This is epitaph enough:
We laughed and cursed and loved—And Stuff.

Yes, loved, and lost, and loved some more
And pray there still is love in store
(Short-circuiting Eve's primal curse
By Cupid's lend-lease in reverse)—
Why not drink to Eve, God bless her
Before our teeth go on the dresser:

Eve whose praise we have established
In verses prudently unpublished,
Eve with cramps or Eve at prayers,
Eve no matter what she wears
From bobbysocks to Bali bra,
From puberty to grandmamma.
See, with eye not too serene,
The *bas bleu* or the ballerine,
Goddess, matron, nymph, and quean.

Boys, methought we did God's bidding
(Which I really meant, no kidding).
Carolled in my long hot bath,
Sang: Belike the time still hath
Foremath besides aftermath;
Sherlock Holmes the truth well put—
Watson, game is still afoot . . .

Overheard a child say, *"Hark!*
The Old Man, whistling in the dark!"

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The Saturday Review
of Literature
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THIS POETRY NUMBER

I LIKE this number because it contains a lot of poetry as well as prose. After all, it is a Poetry Number!

The poetry is of several kinds, from different sources. There are poems from the men in Service, poems from veteran poets, and poems from newcomers, of whom at least one is very young indeed. That is quite as it should be. Also you will note that I have tried to edit a number that should be chiefly of the Western Hemisphere, greeting our great neighbor to the north of us as well as our Latin-American neighbors to the south.

What can I say of poetry in general in this perhaps crucial year of titanic war? First, I can say that, even as the hour of invasion comes upon us and the world prepares for the final and necessarily devastating stroke—for the collapse of the cohorts of evil, and the freeing of a continent—as never before do and will men need a rampart for their minds. Poetry is such a rampart. The phrase is from Masefield. You may remember it in that great poem of his "The Passing Strange." Here are the last stanzas: He says, "The rhythms change, they do not close,"

They change, and we, who pass like foam,
Like dust blown through the streets of Rome,
Change ever too; we have no home,

Only a beauty, only a power
Sad in the fruit, bright in the flower,
Endlessly erring for its hour

But gathering, as we stray, a sense
Of Life, so lovely and intense,
It lingers when we wander hence.

That those who follow feel behind
Their backs, when all before is blind,
Our joy, a rampart to the mind.

I was never in battle in the last war, but I was in camp in America; and I remember that for any spare time I had, though it was slight, a few favorite poems that I had stapled together in a sort of little book were a great refreshment. They were the rampart to my mind. For they spoke of past joy—the joy of the spirit that is poetry at its best. Now in the grimmest of grim hours, when America stands to lose in this final assault more in manpower than she has ever lost in this war, it is a good thing for all who can to encounter good poetry. I think most of the poetry in this number is good, because I think it was written out of deep emotions in a difficult time. We have done with poetry as a sort of tatting or embroidery. Poetry is now speaking out of the deepest need of Mankind. It shines as a light unto our feet, "when all before is blind."

Blind? "What of our high purposes?" you say. It is true that we have high purposes. It is true that this is only the very beginning of a fight for a better world, in which war there is no discharge; but the issue is still in doubt, and victory still in the balance, even in this last of the first most obvious steps. Peace will confront us with enormous problems. So far, our smaller statesmen and representatives have not reassured us, even as to their intelligence in meeting comparatively minor ones. And now the politicians gather, croaking of November.

But the men awaiting Zero Hour are not thinking of factional issues; they are thinking of large and very ancient ones; of life and death. They have to out-think and out-act an enemy desperate and strong. The greatest event of our times rides forward on their bayonets; the binding of ruthless and intolerable power. In peace there will be other ruthless powers to bind. They are already working against us in the darkness—the great international cartels, the monopolies, the concentration of power. But first we must win this war.

So it is not as mere entertainment that I offer the readers of *The Saturday Review of Literature* this issue devoted to poetry, but as representing something very necessary to the spirit of civilized Man, and hence to his physical well-being as well. For I have heard apparently prosaic and materialistic men say after having heard a poem read, "That gave me a big kick!" or "That was a real shot in the arm!" Not a very highbrow way, perhaps, of expressing it; but a good way. For that is exactly what poetry is meant to do. It is meant to brace you to face life, to restore your morale. It reminds you of the beauty of life—in spite of the goriness and horror. It says that men and women are brave, humane, and gentle, can be generous and kind, can laugh and weep. It says that to be alive, just to be alive, is quite a miracle; that the world is a miracle, in an utterly astounding universe!

If you follow poetry, you will grow up; you will take on spiritual stature; you will be better able to bear the things we all now have to bear; you will have a continuing and permanent "rampart to the mind." W. R. B.

Lemurs and War

By Eleanor Glenn Wallis

BECAUSE their forest, glade and ferny dell,
Is taken over by an upright brute,
Because his kit, his hoard of shot and shell
Replaces greenness at the cocoa's root,
The monkeys are disconsolate and run
Before the advance of little man and gun
To shelter in the tree-tops or the deep
Still thicket where a panther lies asleep.
The jungle, formerly a beast's terrain,
Becomes the lair of one who hunts with fire.
Above the foxhole, trench and sultry mire
The lemur skips in sorrowful disdain.

Ghostly against the eucalyptus bark,
He peers from out the shadow of a ruff
That, pouring thickly on the mobile dark,
Illuminates his form from tail to scruff.
Puzzled, he views the enemy beneath,
A strange unknown who threatens stranger death:
Not single combat nor by claw and tooth
But that which mangles quickly without ruth,
Hurling the victim to his last domain.
So, governed by a standard jungle-bred,
Himself defenceless and unhelmeted,
The lemur skips in resolute disdain.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Mr. Lewis and Mr. DeVoto

SIR: In bopping Mr. DeAugust DeVoto, Sinclair Lewis is guilty of some pretty wild swings on the side. Though he murders his "old friend" he should have watched his consistencies in other directions. No, it won't resurrect Mr. DeV. but it suggests Mr. L. is--dare one say?—slipping, intoxicated perhaps by the bold and naughty freedom of plastering "liar" and "fool" on another writer. So jaunty and lusty and Yale! But he gets a little too gay. En passant, to be sure, yet disastrously. Or at least—ungracefully. "Stumble-footed," he calls the DeVoted style. But he himself trips on his own critical hurdles.

Take the following sequence:

". . . since no serious critic, like Mr. Brooks or Mr. Carl Van Doren or Mr. Fadiman or Mr. *Edmund Wilson* (ital. mine), has thought it worth while to deflate him, many innocent and youthful believers still listen to him."

(Later) "What would happen if men like O'Neill and Hemingway . . . should some day turn on such talmudists as DeVoto (four other names), and *Edmund Wilson*—I wonder if it is an accident that Mr. Wilson's invariable nickname, Bunny, so resembles Mr. DeVoto's Benny?"

(Still later "It might be impossible to persuade Ernest Hemingway to spend even one hour in reading the *pomposities* of Benny and Bunny, but if he should ever see how easy it is to crush them at their own game, then God help those *mincing messiahs.*"

And please, Mr. Lewis, note the resemblance" between my name and Bunny's. Yes, you guessed it. Nepotism.

STANLEY KIDDER WILSON.

Boston, Mass.

SIR: Almost two years ago at Phi Beta Kappa exercises at Harvard I heard Bernard DeVoto publicly attack the American literary culture of the twenties. Since then Mr. DeVoto seems to have extended the range of his strictures to include practically all literary production in the United States in the years between the Wars, particularly that of his own generation, whichever one that may be. One of the main sources of Mr. DeVoto's condemnation is still that American writers of the twenties and thirties were not sufficiently appreciative of their own country and its people, that unlike their predecessors, they responded too incompletely to the promise of American life. Mr. DeVoto thinks that the two decades will come to be considered an "Age of Ignominy" in our cultural history.

To have reached such a conclusion, Mr. DeVoto can only have ignored or misinterpreted the meaning of a substantial part of contemporary American writing. I want to draw attention to only a few of the developments—considering merely the twenties—which entirely belies Mr. DeVoto's charges:

(1) The appearance of Hart Crane's "Bridge," with its magnificent hymns to American symbols like Brooklyn Bridge and the Mississippi River.

(2) The work of Stephen Vincent Benét, especially "John Brown's Body."

(3) The intense quickening of interest in our literary past that led to the rediscovery of Herman Melville and Emily Dickinson and to fresh interpretations of many of our most important writers.

(4) The continuing concern with regional patterns of culture, which had its most productive results in the work of the Southern agrarians.

(5) The broadening conception of American history, illustrated by Parrington's volumes.

Much of the nationalist feeling in the more recent work of some of our writers, Mr. DeVoto sneeringly labels as conversion. A more charitable man and a more perceptive critic might have seen it as fruition. To give an example: H. L. Mencken's great interest in the American language is no reversal. It stems directly from his preoccupation (less unappreciative than Mr. DeVoto thinks) in the twenties with quirks and aberrations in the American character.

Far from coming to be regarded as anti-patriotic and anti-national, the literary life of the twenties and thirties may very well be seen in truer perspective than Mr. DeVoto's as dominated by a rising and ever-intensified nationalist consciousness. Mr. DeVoto's crusade of the last two years is an illustration of the excesses of which that now belligerent nationalism is capable.

EDWARD HANDLER.

Washington, D. C.

—Reprinted from SRL, December 14, 1935.

"Courting the muse?"

SIR: I blush for Sinclair Lewis. I too have a violent temper and I know there is a wonderful intoxication about getting into a rage, but what a horrible, humiliating hang-over it leaves!

This is just a reaction of an affectionate reader. At his age, Lewis should have more self-control.

EMILY M. PATTERSON.

Evanston, Illinois.

SIR: I have just completed Mr. Sinclair Lewis's brilliantly witty satire on Mr. Bernard DeVoto's "Literary Fallacy."

It is, to be sure, one of the best, as well as bitter, essays I have had the pleasure of reading in many a day.

WILLIAM GRAY.

SIR: What an interesting literary paradox!

Bernard DeVoto could have written the Great American Novel
And didn't.
Sinclair Lewis could not have written the Great American Novel
And did.

OTTO REISING.

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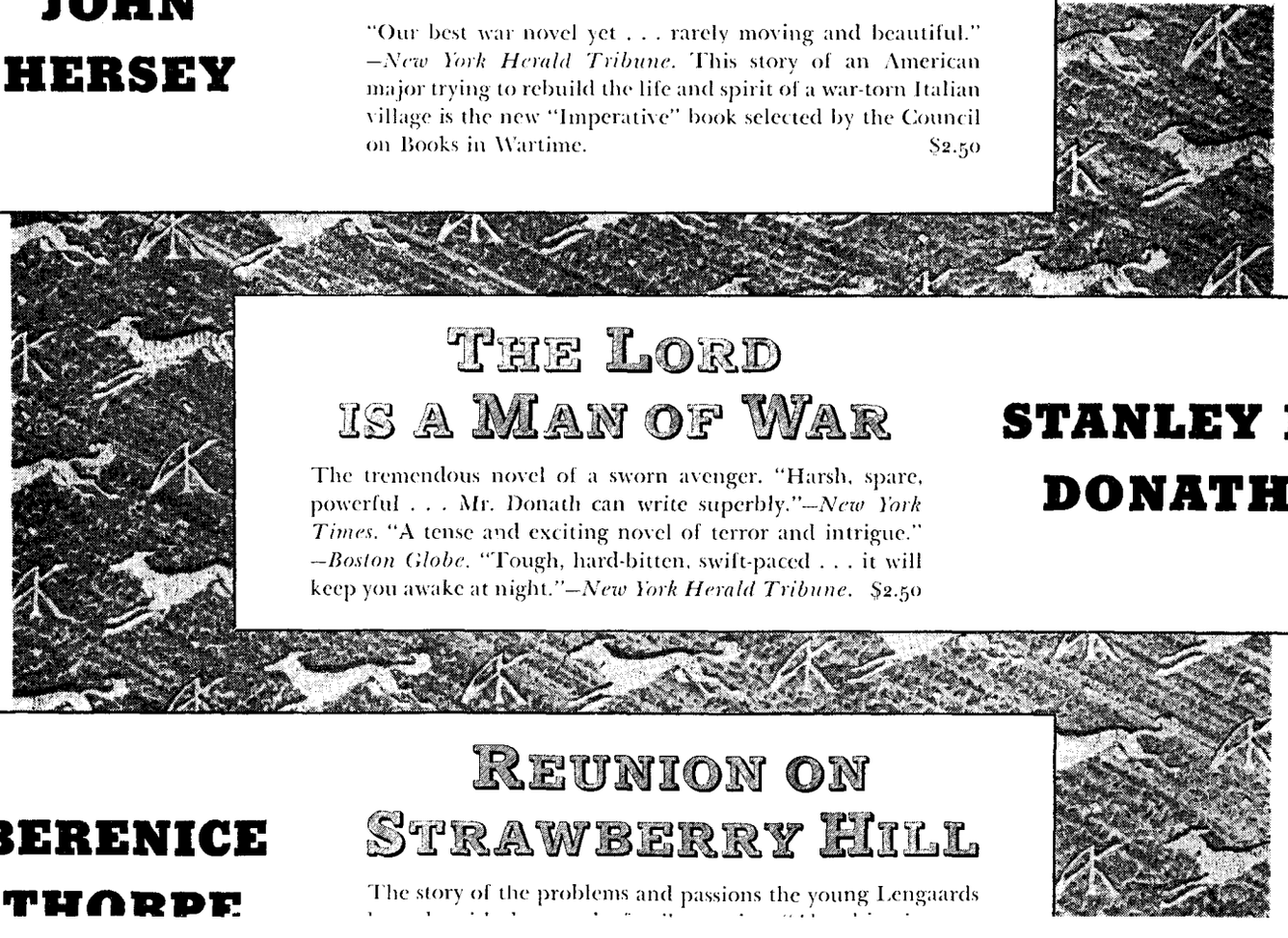

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TRADE Winds

UNLESS ALL SIGNS FAIL, June, 1944, is likely to be the month in which the war will reach its bloodiest and most decisive phase. That outstanding neutral, General Franco, has chosen it above all others for an international trade fair in Barcelona, Spain! With his own country impoverished and starving, and with the others concentrating on military needs, the Lord only knows what Franco is going to scrape up to exhibit at this Fair, but a sturdy little group in our own State Department is helping all it can. The United States Government itself will have an exhibit, and the State Department has asked a number of American firms, including book publishers, to submit material for display there.

The State Department conveyed its request to the publishers by means of a letter from the Office of War Information, which included the paragraph:

"The United States will, of course, be in competition with the Axis, and naturally we must make the best possible showing before the Spaniards."

A number of publishers have already sent, or are preparing to send, books for the purpose outlined. They honestly believe that something constructive may be accomplished by exhibiting at this Fair books that "project American life, thought and achievement"—that will point out to the Spanish people the blessings of democracy. In order to accomplish that result, of course, and ignoring for the moment the fact that our sending anything to this Fair proclaims to the world our tacit approval of the Franco dictatorship, the following insignificant hurdles will have to be negotiated:

1. The books will have to be approved by representatives of the clique in the U. S. State Department that advocates collaboration and appeasement of Franco Spain. Can you picture these gentlemen allowing books like Allan Chase's "Falange," or Thomas Hamilton's "Appeasement's Child," or volumes by Steinbeck, Hemingway, Hersey, Wallace, Reston, or Grafton to be included in the consignment?

2. The books will undergo a second careful scrutiny when they arrive in Spain. If you believe that the Franco regime will allow a public display of any book that condemns or even questions the fascist ideal of government, it seems to me that you are falling into the dangerous old trap of underestimating the intelligence of your enemy.

3. The books will have to be seen, finally, by people susceptible of learning something from them. What kind of Spaniards are likely to patronize this ill-timed exposition of Franco's? The flower of the Spanish people were either killed in the war, murdered or imprisoned since, or are living only for the day when they can overthrow a government they hate. To tell such people as these the meaning of freedom and democracy is an impertinence. The other kind don't want to know.

In short, I maintain that "the best possible showing" we could make before the Spanish people would be to cut off diplomatic relations immediately with Franco and his out and out fascist government, and to exhibit no American books or goods of any kind in Spain until the present government is thrown out on its ear, and the will of the overwhelming majority of the Spanish people be allowed to prevail.

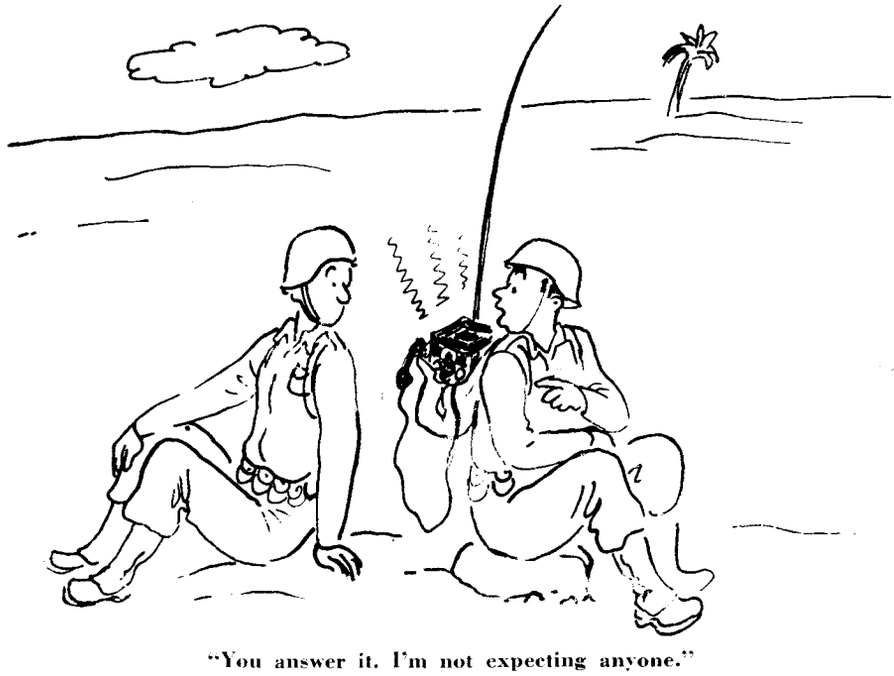
I quote the following story from the *New York Herald Tribune* of April 12. Any comment would be superfluous:

SPAIN EASES LITERATURE BAN

> The Madrid radio announced yesterday that Spanish authorities have decided to lift censorship from pre-1800 Spanish literature, pre-1910 lyrics and some Church literature, and hailed the step as "revealing to what extent Spain has entered a period of normality." The broadcast was recorded by United States Government monitors. . . .

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN, the publishers of "The Robe," assure me that they are under no legal obligation whatever to continue advertising the book. The reason, apparently, that they are able to push this phenomenal best seller in spite of increasing paper shortages is that they were among the first to recognize the necessity of reducing the bulk and size of their books. . . . I did not mean to give the impression that Houghton Mifflin were experiencing any more difficult paper problem with "The Robe" than the publishers of any of the other current best sellers are having with *their* allotments. Every publisher must decide today just how his limited quantity of paper is to be divided: so much for current leaders, so much for deserving newcomers that can never be great sellers but richly deserve encouragement, so much for "dark horses" on the as-yet-tentative fall lists. . . . It's a tough proposition all around, and any solution is bound to step on *somebody's* toes. You can believe the story of the publisher who read the front-page reviews of a new novel on his list, reached for an aspirin, and groaned "Oh, my God, we've got another best seller!" . . .

EVER HEAR ABOUT the tiger who cornered Mr. Aesop, and ate him for Sunday dinner? "Well, Aesop," said the tiger pleasantly, "I suppose you'll be making up a fable about this now, too!" . . . A bibliophile was poking around a second-hand shop and came across a rare old quarto that he wanted. "I'll give you fifteen dollars for it," he said. "Take it," sighed the dealer, "but I paid twenty-five for it myself." "How can you stay in business on any basis like that?" scoffed the customer. "Sssh," cautioned the deal-



"You answer it. I'm not expecting anyone."

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er. "I make a wrong entry in the ledger!" . . . Preston Sturges threatens to produce a travesty hoss oprey, and call it "Hopalong Horowitz." . . . Dorothea Cornwell has won the *Redbook*-Dodd Mead $10,000 Fiction Prize for 1944 with her novel, "They Dare Not Go A'Hunting." . . . Dorothy Parker was the inspiration for both the George Oppenheimer play, "Here Today," and Ruth Gordon's "Over Twenty-One." "I suppose if I ever dared to write a play about myself now," commented Miss Parker sourly, "I'd be sued for plagiarism!" . . .

A PROMINENT PUBLISHING HOUSE, cleaning out its files for the Paper Salvage Drive, unearthed a bundle of manuscript reports dating back to the early 1880s. One of them, a report on a novel called "Amy," by S. S. Morton, is a perfect reflection on literary standards of the period, and is reprinted here without so much as a comma altered or deleted:

February 14, 1888.

A M Y by S. S. Morton

An entirely undesirable novel. Two young and beautiful girls are living in an obscure American village. No one seems to know anything as to their family history. They are, apparently, well-born—but they have no sponsor; and they live by themselves, in a charming little cottage, over which numberless roses clamber. Of course, a charming young man of the world appears on the scene. He meets the sisters without an introduction, and in order to gratify his vanity, or for some other purpose best known to men of that sort, he sets himself to "breaking the heart" of Amy—the elder girl. In this, he succeeds—so promptly, and so easily, at the very outset of the story, that the reader is at once intensely disgusted and indignant with Amy, for extreme silliness, and with her betrayer, for his wicked duplicity. Before saying anything to the girl on the subject of love or marriage, he holds her in his arms, on two or three occasions, on which he amuses himself by kissing her—which the girls seems to think altogether captivating. Finally, Amy dies; the family mystery is then all cleared up; the long lost mother appears; Amy's sister marries the family physician; the father considerately dies, leaving a big fortune to the second sister; and the young villain is left unpunished.

Character: A novel of the baser sort, with no attractions for the better class of readers. . . .

MEL MINTON WONDERS what the shade of Billy Phelps must think of his successor's book reviews in *Esquire*. I'd like to know myself! . . . If Ilona Ralf Sues wants to write her next book about the Malayan peninsula, she may call it "Sues to Singapore" with the compliments of Cecil Brown and Random House. . . . Theodore Pratt's new novel, "Thunder Mountain," refers frequently to "Levis," those skin-tight denim trousers that are so popular with both sexes in some of the Western states. The Levi Strauss Company, manufacturers of the garment, sent the author a complimentary pair, partly in gratitude, partly to indicate their belief, shared by Trade Winds, that any tale of Theodore Pratt's is worth covering. . . . Esther Forbes has gone back to Salem for the scene of her next novel, the time being a hundred and fifty years later than "A Mirror for Witches." . . . There soon will be a new series of "Mr. and Mrs. Cugat" stories by Isabel Rorick. . . . That "Skeleton Key to Finnegan's Wake" has been postponed until the Fall. Joseph Campbell and Henry Morton Robinson are the Little Locksmiths. . . . Lt. William Bradford Huie, author of "Mud on the Stars," has written the story of the Seabees. It's called "Can Do," and it ought to be a hummer. Dutton will publish it in the Fall. . . . If somebody asks you what the initials M.D., D.D., and L.L.D. stand for, don't answer "Doctor of Medicine, Doctor of Divinity, and Doctor of Law." The *correct* answer is "Mairzy Doats, Dozy Doats, and Liddle Lamzy Divey."

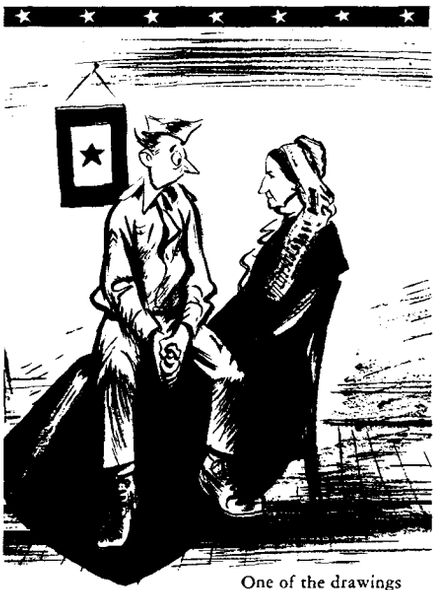
BENNETT CERF.

Funeral of Clocks

By Dilys Bennett Laing

THERE is no peace. The righteous clock
who utters minutes in my head
admonishing with nick and knock
my slow resemblance to the dead
is like a cricket in a can,
is like an ant upon the skin.
There is no hope for me and man
to shrive us of our earthly sin.

There would be hope if there were time,
there would be time if calendars
and clocks were shriven of their crime
on pyres beneath the leisured stars,
leaving the planet's quiet wheel
to brake the hurry of our heel.



One of the drawings by *William Crawford*, who also illustrated *Barefoot Boy With Cheek*.

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MAX SHULMAN

author of

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DOUBLEDAY, DORAN

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Mark Van Doren and Stanley Kunitz

THE SEVEN SLEEPERS. By Mark Van Doren. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1944. 123 *pp.* $2.50.

PASSPORT TO A WAR. By Stanley Kunitz. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1944. 60 *pp.* $2.

Reviewed by HORACE GREGORY

FOR the past fifteen years or so, Mr. Mark Van Doren has been an unusually prolific and—one should add—industrious writer. He has written novels and books of verse, essays in criticism, and recently, as though he had scarcely stopped to take a breath, a book on education. This latter treatise, or study, or what you will, is a book extolling the virtues of St. John's College in Maryland, and because of it, one need not be surprised to find his present volume of new verses dedicated to St. John's which has become the latest object of his admiration. In respect to industrious production and in the quality of its utterance, Mr. Van Doren's work has few parallels on this side of the Atlantic, but one does find a similar industry, along with a general air of "keeping up to date," in the prose and verse of the British editor and critic, Mr. Herbert Read.

The title of Mr. Van Doren's new book is, I take it, chosen in memory of a line from John Donne's famous poem, "The Good-Morrow," which read, "Or snorted we in the seven sleepers den?" as well as the ancient legend of the seven sleepers, who at St. John's, so Mr. Van Doren reassures us, "the Seven are awake." I daresay this may be construed as a threat or a promise, but let me hasten to add that Mr. Van Doren's book of occasional verses, some of which were published in 1942 under the title, "Our Lady Peace and Other War Poems," is a most un-Donne-like performance, nor do the verses touch depths of imagination and fantasy that are usually associated with images of mythological reference. If Mr. Van Doren's verses are read upon another level, a level less profound than those suggested by his title, they possess, so it seems to me, benign intentions. I offer quotations from new verses as evidence of his good faith however inexact or inexpert his performance may appear:

> Come near, my chick,
> Authority's love
> Is delicate too;
> Is donkey, is dove
>
> ** *** **
>
> Eternity's water, which the eye
> Ignore as air, alas, alas
>
> ** *** **
>
> Or we may do otherwise;
> May pound him perfect. Which is why we blink.
>
> ** *** **
>
> Slept, negative, across those poles of breast.

In the first quotation I am uncertain as to whether "Authority's love" is supposed as stupid as a donkey's love or not; and if so, is a dove's love of the same quality? I do feel certain that "dove" is there for the sake of an easy and, let us say, not-too-original rhyme. Questions of a similar nature arise in the other quotations from Mr. Van Doren's verse, but to ask them sharply or too severely would, I think, do scanty justice to the general good will that Mr. Van Doren has so obviously in mind. Mr. Van Doren's verse conveys the impression of being written by someone who is decidedly in earnest, but at the same time is quite unserious in the phrasing of what he has to say.

—*SRL Etching by Theodore Brenson*
Mark Van Doren

Because of my own admiration for Franz Kafka's novels and short stories, I took particular interest in Mr. Van Doren's lines to Kafka which are printed in his book under the title, "Northern Minstrel." To conceive of Kafka as being a "minstrel" or a "bard" is to my mind a highly whimsical idea; this does no harm, of course, to those who have actually read his remarkable allegories in realistic prose, but I began to wonder, since Mr. Van Doren mentions "ogres" who "roared," whether or not he had confused Kafka with unclear memories of Ibsen, Strindberg, and the Brothers Grimm. I do not propose to quarrel with Mr. Van Doren's impressions of whatever he thinks about when he thinks of Kafka, but I do believe that "northern minstrels" in modern literature are extremely rare, and perhaps the last of them is best recalled in the handsome features of Sir Walter Scott.

At first glance, the distance between Mr. Kunitz's verses and Mr. Van Doren's seems far too great to be circumcribed within a brief review: where Mr. Van Doren writes loosely, Mr. Kunitz's verse is specific in its reference, is often shrill, is serious in a manner that Mr. Van Doren's verse is not, and has, so I would say, a general lack of ease. But on second reading a common denom-

Your Literary I. Q.

By Howard Collins

UNUSUAL FIRST NAMES OF CHARACTERS

Charles Dickens was not the only author to capitalize upon the fact that giving a character an unusual name has some extra recognition value. Of the 51 well known characters whose first names are listed below, how many can you identify? Allowing 2 points for each correct answer, a score of 60 is par, 70 is very good, 80 or better is excellent. You'll find their last names on page 25.

1. Algernon.
2. Bathsheba.
3. Bigger.
4. Bingo.
5. Clovis.
6. Colin.
7. Cosmo.
8. Dink.
9. Disko.
10. Doremus.
11. Edmond.
12. Emmeline.
13. Enoch.
14. Fancourt.
15. Florian.
16. Gavin.
17. Hedda.
18. Hercule.
19. Ichabod.
20. Jeeter.
21. Kimball.
22. Lorna.
23. Manon.
24. Mateo.
25. Miniver.
26. Moll.
27. Mycroft.
28. Nero.
29. Peachey.
30. Penelope.
31. Penrod.
32. Peregrine.
33. Pollyanna.
34. Phileas.
35. Rawdon.
36. Reginald.
37. Rhett.
38. Robinson.
39. Sancho.
40. Scattergood.
41. Sheridan.
42. Soames.
43. Tanis.
44. Tish.
45. Trilby.
46. Tristram.
47. Uriah.
48. Wackford.
49. Wilkins.
50. Yancey.
51. Zuleika.

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inator for both volumes of verses is not too hard too find. Both books are written in a minor strain and both bear marks of a feminine literary influence which may be traced to readings in Emily Dickinson. Mr. Kunitz's verse stems from a source which may be called "the blood, the bone, and the brain school" and which flourished so generously among women poets of the mid-nineteen-twenties. With the single exception of Elinor Wylie, the feminine converts to the so-called "metaphysical" school wrote of "bones" and "blood" and "brains" with little respect for and small understanding of the religious doubts and conflicts of seventeenth century poetry. All the superficial mannerisms of seventeenth century poetry were lavishly assumed and were worn as gallantly as a new evening gown decked with a string of "pearls" from Woolworth's. What the mannerisms lacked were, of course, the masculine intellectual virility of Donne and the technical proficiency of Herbert—and what was most amazing (since imitation is often the severest criticism) was the number of thoroughly male poets who adopted feminine attitudes in writing verse. Mr. Kunitz's verse is of that heritage, and though some fourteen years have elapsed between the publication of his first book, "Intellectual Things," and the present volume, he has not yet succeeded in extricating himself from the pitfalls of his earlier work. From his first book he republishes (slightly rewritten):

Dear mortal boy, I may come back,
But do not wait for me.

And among his newly written verses one discovers such unfortunate fancies as:

Naked I prowl, scourged by the black
Temptation of the blood grown proud.
and
I brandish the great bone of my death

I am not quite sure what Mr. Kunitz means in confessing the presence of these melodramatic gestures, but I am certain that they are unattractive to the eye and that they seem more histrionic than convincing. At bottom, or at the source of whatever his emotions are, Mr. Kunitz may be sincere, but his blackest "temptation," is, I think, a theatrical display of dubiously "metaphysical" images and rhetoric. Perhaps I have taken both Mr. Van Doren and Mr. Kunitz with greater seriousness than they intend to be read and appreciated, and if they do not say quite what they seem to mean, their verse will not unhinge the frailest mind, nor will the banks of the Hudson roar with flames because their books are published in the same season.

Seven Good Poets

STILL LIFE AND OTHER VERSE. By E. J. Pratt. Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada. 1943.

MORNING IN IOWA. A Narrative Poem. By Robert Nathan. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1944. 50 *pp.* $1.75.

TRIAL BY TIME. By Thomas Hornsby Ferril. New York: Harper & Brothers. 1944. 105 *pp.* $2.

THE BIG TIME. Verse by Alfred Hayes. Drawings by Beatrice Tobias. New York: Howell, Soskin. 1944. 101 *pp.* $2.50.

A WREATH FOR THE SEA. By Robert Fitzgerald. New York: Arrow Editions, New Directions. 1943. 122 *pp.* $2.50.

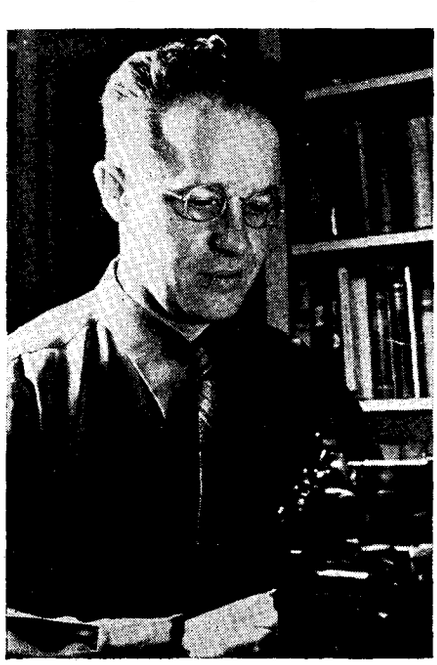
LOVE LETTER FROM AN IMPOSSIBLE LAND. By William Meredith. Foreword by Archibald MacLeish. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1944. 50 *pp.* $2.

PRIVATE PAPERS. By William Justema. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce. 1944. 38 *pp.* $1.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

I BEGIN with a Canadian, as I have arranged these poets according to seniority. Mr. Pratt is today the leading poet of Canada. His long poems, "Brébeouf and His Brethren," "The Cachalot," "The Titanic," "Dunkerque," etc. are among the best and most stirring of our time. A selected American edition of his poems is contemplated in the near future. In the meanwhile he has given us a group of shorter poems. His title poem counsels poets of our day to turn for themes to the dead in the mud of the Yellow River and

A stone west of the bend where the
Volga flows
To lick her cubs on the Stalingrad
rubble.



Thomas Hornsby Ferril

In the next poem, "The Truant," he invokes the eternal stubborn spirit of Man, in which the six-foot high *genus homo* defies the all Highest of the Universe. Again, in the same semi-satirical style he discusses the radio, and gives us such a poem on a Submarine and on the Airplane as seen by The Dying Eagle as only Pratt can, short rhymed lines, or free verse. A characteristic of this poet is his detailed realism. In him there is nothing vague. He is acquainted with life and death, and the deep ironies of both, but they do not terrify him. This little book is right out of our own time.

Robert Nathan has done a more ambitious narrative poem than any he has so far attempted, one in which I find in the first part traces of one who was a brother to me and an old friend to Bob. Whatever traces there are, they come from a deep appreciation. There is plenty of Nathan as a poet here, and a very good poet at that. The work is head and shoulders above his more publicized "Dunkerque." The passage I shall quote is pure poetry. He tells the story of two lives meeting by chance, two who were destined for each other, and as background he gives you authentically seen and felt American landscape, from east to west. He is adroit in his condensations, and particularly moving (as in his prose) when treating of the wistful, ignorant impulses of youth. The following, imbedded in the narrative, is as beautiful a lyric as I have read for many a day:

Here on this earth much garlanded
with love,
Where even the blossoms seek each
other out
A wind's full distance, and the roaming bee
Runs like a priest among the married
buds,

Where crab and salmon, butterfly and
dove
Meet in the air and in the endless sea
At some appointed hour, and the great
moth
Seeks his adored across the hills and
woods,

Man, too, makes voyages. And where
he goes
He knows no more than halibut or fly,
No more than the brief pollen of the
rose
Or the cool bird above him in the sky.

Tom Ferril's poetry has been praised by Carl Sandburg. He hails from Den-

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ver. He writes of Colorado and those parts, and his poetry has been called "America talking." "Trial by Time" is his third book. He's in industrial work and says in his preface, "Putting Poems Together," that the "worst place for poets are the library, the study, the English department of the university; they lead with one foot to the ivory tower and with the other to the confusion of poetry and the social sciences." There's some truth in that, but each man to his own ground. Poetry has been written in all sorts of places. Ferril's essay is worth your reading, but his poems are better. He can tell you about Leadville, dance you a symbolic square dance, or counsel you on barbed wire gates. He is as photographic of his West as is Frost of his New Hampshire. Here are three verses from his "Lens for Plum Blossom":

Sundown notches the mountain gap,
I snatch a twig of cottonwood,
I stare at the sun through amber sap
That droops from an icy bud.

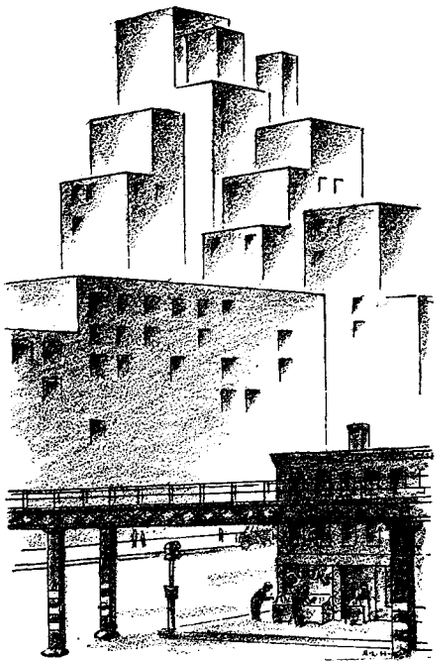
It isn't like a lens of glass,
Nothing that I see is clear:
Blur of bud and mountain pass
Over a horse's ear.

Yet staring so, not budged an inch,
I feel the white plum blossoms come
To blow against the saddle cinch
Shuddering winter-numb.

Robert Fitzgerald can also write of Colorado at the end of "A Wreath for the Sea," but he mostly deals with more sophisticated matters. He commemorates John Wheelwright as did Leonard Bacon in his latest book, but for different reasons. In the midst of scholarship he can give you a very real baseball game. He writes interesting autobiography of how "Santa Clara among the western orchards Gave me my Latin, Xenophon and Euclid, In Jesuit drills: *huius, huius, huius.*" Nothing like an Irish Catholic education for that! I don't like his translation of the farewell from Catullus as well as my own; but this book holds true and mature poetry of distinction, and I hope may lead many a reader back to his original "Poems."

Elsewhere I have said of "The Big Time," by Alfred Hayes, what I think I cannot say better, that "he uses the less flagrant rhythms between good prose and good poetry to interpret realistically what many will call the seamy side of city life. It is the side of life which fascinated such great draughtsmen as Daumier and Forain, and it is not too much to say that in his own field, with workmanship that never degenerates into the slovenly, Mr. Hayes meets their eyes across the years." His work has drama, sophistication, and bite. It is full of real irony. A tough book but a real one.

Archibald MacLeish is now the new



editor of The Yale Series of Younger Poets which my brother edited for ten years and made the best-known series of first books of young writers in the United States. Young men from the Middle West have testified to me that, when they came to consult him, he read their work at lightning speed and hit upon strength or weakness unerringly. Mr. MacLeish pays him a warm and graceful tribute in his own foreword to Mr. William Meredith's first book. He says my brother would have liked the way the literary vehicle of the Princeton undergraduate in his earlier poems "turns into the live idiom of a poet's speech reaching for poetry." The latter poems are the best. Mr. Meredith is a Navy flier and knows flying. He also knows Dutch Harbor and the Aleutians. And in "Airman's Virtue" we find him adapting, of all people, George Herbert. He is not always easy to "get" at the first reading; but here is a poem as good as most that have come out of the War:

NAVY FIELD

Limped out of the hot sky a hurt plane,
Held off, held off, whirring pretty pigeon,
Hit then and scuttled to a crooked stop.
The stranger pilot who emerged—this was the seashore,
War came suddenly here—talked to the still mechanics
Who nodded gravely. Flak had done it, he said,
From an enemy ship attacked. They wheeled it with love
Into the dark hangar's mouth and tended it.
Coffee and cake for the pilot then who sat alone
In the restaurant, reading the numbered sheets
That tell about weather. After, toward dusk,
Mended the stranger plane went back to the sky.
His curly-headed picture, and mother's and medal's pictures
Were all we knew of him after he rose again,
Those few electric jewels against the moth and whining sky.

William Justema tells us of an Army year, in "Private Papers." Here the well-known poet, Witter Bynner, relates something about this man of forty who has grown so fast in the last years. After Pearl Harbor, he who had been painter, poet, actor, and designer of fabrics, enlisted in the 601st Engineers Camouflage Battalion, rose to the rank of sergeant, making a great success of his work, and finally received a medical discharge in 1943. His book is a slight, impressionistic, poetic diary of his service. Without any question it speaks the artist. It has sensitiveness and wit. It is my own belief that more good poetry will come out of the war from men in the Services than ever emerged from the last. The artist type seems better understood in this one and more intelligently set to work.

To My Small Son, Beachcombing

By Sara Henderson Hay

THE sea has treasures—ingots of bright gold,
Coffers of silver coins, and jewelled rings,
Emeralds and carven jade, and precious things
More than your pockets, more than a house could hold.
She hides them in her glimmering icy caves,
They lie long fathoms down, the dark weeds bind them,
And you and I, my son, will never find them
Flung on the beaches by the careless waves.

But she will give you a stone, rubbed smooth and shining,
Keeping its colors even when it is dry,
And a periwinkle's home, like a little bell,
And an oyster's empty hinge, with its pearly lining,
And a wisp of sponge, and a marvellous fluted shell
With the sound of her voice therein, to remember her by.

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Thompson Themes

POEMS. By Dunstan Thompson. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1943. 55 *pp.* $2.

Reviewed by DUDLEY FITTS

DUNSTAN THOMPSON, who was associated with Harry Brown in that entertaining, valuable, and all too infrequently appearing poetry review *Vice Versa*, offers here the first collection of his work. As one would expect, its technical level is high. Even the slightest poems are models of construction, refined, polished, with never a loose end; and the workmanship of the longer pieces—"Largo," for instance, and "Images of Disaster" and "Articles of War"—proves the author's mastery of all the tricks of the trade. And I use that shoddy phrase deliberately, for, wishing to be convinced, reading and rereading with a full appreciation of and delight in the surface brilliances of these poems, I find myself surprised and disappointed, unable to sense any conviction beneath the surface. The themes are the right themes, the attitudes—though at times chillingly perverse—the right attitudes, and there should be poetry here, and if there is I cannot find it. It is as though a very ordinary sensibility had been endowed with a tremendous virtuosity—which adds up to Chopin at best, to Czerny or Heller at worst. Consequently, the virtuosity itself pales. What dims first, it seems to me, is the echoing of Auden—the Modern Comforts cataloguing, as in Auden's engaging but inimitable poems about the locker-room, the public school, the playing-field—and the constant evocation of Hart Crane.

What fades next is Mr. Thompson's trick of insistent alliteration and rapidly recurring internal rhyme: Only a seriousness as fierce as Hopkins's or Joyce's could justify so much of this kind of writing as Mr. Thompson permits himself. And I can not find that seriousness here.

ANSWERS TO LITERARY QUIZ

1. Moncrieff. 2. Everdene. 3. Thompson. 4. Little. 5. Sangrail. 6. Glencannon. 7. Topper. 8. Stover. 9. Troop. 10. Jessup. 11. Dantes. 12. Grangerford. 13. Arden. 14. Babberly. 15. Slappey. 16. Dishart. 17. Gabler. 18. Poirot. 19. Crane. 20. Lester. 21. O'Hara. 22. Doone. 23. Lescault. 24. Falcone. 25. Cheevy. 26. Flanders. 27. Holmes. 28. Wolfe. 29. Carnahan. 30. Sycamore. 31. Schofield. 32. Pickle. 33. Whittier. 34. Fogg. 35. Crawley. 36. Bunthorne. 37. Butler. 38. Crusoe. 39. Panza. 40. Baines. 41. Whiteside. 42. Forsyte. 43. Judique. 44. Carberry. 45. O'Ferrall. 46. Shandy. 47. Heep. 48. Squeers. 49. Micawber. 50. Cravat. 51. Dobson.

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Lt. William Meredith

With a Foreword by Archibald MacLeish

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The Poetry of Theodore Spencer

AN ACT OF LIFE. By Theodore Spencer. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1944. 82 *pp.* $2.

Reviewed by WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT

THEODORE SPENCER gave us, in 1941, "The Paradox in the Circle"; wrote "These poems were written to be read aloud"; and took for his theme song,

> The quick man, running around,
> Is the only man who's still.
> *Nothing is true but paradox;*
> *Beginning is the end.*

Recently I heard him read aloud his second amusing "Escapist's Song" from this book. He did such "rounds" extremely well. He brought something revived and simple and singing into our poetry, something like sophisticated nursery rhyme, if such a thing could be. I quoted at the time his "Polite Song," but it was, perhaps, least characteristic of him. His most characteristic poems were like tricks of prestidigitation, done with superb gravity. He became a *New Directions* Poet of the Month; but was certainly unlike any of the others that bloomed in that garden.

Now, lo and behold, he turns out to be one of the lights of the English department at Harvard; and his second book contains three long meditative poems. He is writing less dancing and more reflective verse about Man's search for himself. Yet there is still some of that dancing in it, too. The meditative poems (strangely) are poems read before various chapters of Phi Beta Kappa—because they are quite unlike most Phi Beta Kappa poems. One, about alumni, is strong in its challenge and acute in its portraiture. If Spencer has become "Academic," it is only on the surface. He may break out anywhere at any moment. I warn Harvard!

The title for the new book, he tells us, is taken from a letter written by Henry James to Henry Adams, thirty years ago. All Spencer's poems are "acts of life." Read the one "Enlistment," in the section, "Challenges." Read the deep wisdom, too, in section 9 of "The World in Your Hand," about "Those who seek in song / Some remedy for ill." It is phrased with finality. Read this sonnet:

> Eunuchs, abortive Platonists and priests
> Speak always very wisely about love.
> Boasting that men are not at all like beasts,
> They fit each differing man into one groove.
> They find it most convenient and easy to say:
> "Passion! Down to hell where you belong!
> Constraint! Up into heaven; up this way!"
> They've got it all worked out. And worked out wrong.
>
> For what experienced man could ever tell,
> With our entangled love before his mind,
> Which part belongs to heaven, which to hell,
> Or say how heaven and hell can be defined?
> What man who's ever shared our tortured bliss
> Dare say of heaven, "It's that": of hell, "It's this"?

"To shape wise thought in words has been / Always the poet's discipline," says Spencer in "Heritage" and in it he shapes wise thought indeed. As I grow older, this is the kind of poetry I find less and less among contemporaries, or among the young. I like such poetry. And if this poet is, in the present book, not particularly showing off his intellectual muscles or doing feats on the rings and bars of verbal agility, he has already proved that he can be original and brilliant in method. Now he reassures us that he really has something to say.

Our Quest

By Lt. Simons Roof (JG) USNR

A SHADOW in the closing eyes of death
becomes a flame in other eyes;
our quest is not for distant, burning suns,
from worlds within our suns arise.

Our quest is touching love, to feel it warm
like golden streams or rivered blood;
the father lifts the child from pools of dark
above the sparkle of the mud.

O, all these shaping moments pass into
a vista where the shapes are lone
and ghosts; but love's an upward rushing wind,
and wind was never held in stone.

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Multiple Reflection

THE SHIELD OF ACHILLES: Essays on Beliefs in Poetry. By Horace Gregory. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1944. 211 *pp.* $2.50.

Reviewed by THEODORE SPENCER

MR. GREGORY calls his collection of essays "The Shield of Achilles," because, he says, "we are inclined to see in [the Shield's] creation an analogy to and a criterion for the art of writing poetry". The Shield is a multiple reflection of life, from Orion and the Bear to the scenes of war and peace on earth. The essays cover a wide range of subjects: the first is on Dr. Johnson and the last is on Paul Elmore More; in between there are discussions of, among others, Beddoes, Poe, Landor, Henley, George Moore, Yeats, D. H. Lawrence, and Virginia Woolf.

The sub-title of the book is somewhat misleading, for it is hard to see what "beliefs" have to do with a good many of the essays; those on John Clare, Landor, and Henley, for example. If "belief" is central in these discussions, the word has to be so broadly interpreted that it loses all useful meaning. Mr. Gregory's own criterion of poetic excellence seems to be more concerned with intelligence than "belief"; I quote a key sentence from his essay on Wordsworth:

> It is intelligence in its heightened sense, and in, I think, the best meaning of the term, that enters all poetry worthy of our attention; it implies an awareness and a sensibility reflected in the poem itself, and however subconscious, or deliberate its offices may be, it imposes those limitations that are sometimes separately regarded as poetic form; it is sensible of ethics and of the devotional spirit, and for the individual poet as well as the reader of his poetry it sometimes illuminates the darkened path toward a true knowledge of mankind.

At his best Mr. Gregory is always aware of this intelligence, and able to point it out in the poetry he admires. To it, his concern with "belief" seems incidental.

There are various ways to give unity to a collection of critical essays. They may illustrate a single historical period (Eliot's "Elizabethan Essays"); they may illustrate a particular critical point of view ("The Shelbourne Essays" of Paul Elmer More); they may be bound together by the writer's individual and unmistakable personal style (Virginia Woolf's "Common Reader"). If some such bond fails to unite them, a book of essays falls apart, and becomes merely a collection of fugitive pieces, no matter how hard

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the author, by means of title, sub-title, and preface, tries to forge a chain to hold them together. Unfortunately this is the impression made by the present volume; several of the essays make very interesting reading—those of Henley, Yeats, and Lawrence, for example, all throw fresh light on their subject matter—but there is no real unity to the volume as a whole. Perceptive and intelligent as the writing often is, the volume has no common center from which the various topics are discussed. And even within some of the individual essays the intention seems blurred; we are not sure whether Mr. Gregory wants to emphasize a writer's character, his biography, or his work; several times a critical point—as in the account of Beddoes's Gothic imagination—is made briefly, but insufficiently developed; and occasionally, as in the essay on Wordsworth and Alice's White Knight, the chief theme is so fantastic that its feet are off the ground of reality altogether.

It is the lack of a central point of view, this uncertainty of intention, which makes these essays, interesting and perceptive as they often are, seem characteristic of much contemporary American criticism. Good criticism, really professional criticism, is composed of both sensitivity and knowledge, and when we read it we ought to feel that we are in firm hands; that the sensitivity reveals an insight we can immediately recognize as true, and that the authority is based on a well-sorted and well-proportioned accumulation of facts. But Mr. Gregory, like a good many of our other critics, is not quite firm enough on either count, and we sometimes feel that a too private sensitivity is substituted for solid knowledge, while the insecurity that accompanies a too private sensitivity is bolstered by factual references that are really irrelevant.

The same uncertainty is reflected in the style; at times the over-portentous seriousness which has been the unfortunate stylistic legacy to modern criticism of Eliot's "Sacred Wood" stalks through the sentences; at other times we hear echoes of Virginia Woolf. And there are other sentences the phrasing of which will not bear a very close analysis.

I do not, however, want to give too unfavorable an impression of this book; I have stressed its short-comings because there is enough—a great deal—that is good in it to make the reader anxiously want to find out why the book as a whole is not more complete than it is. Mr. Gregory has a really serious concern with literature, he makes us aware of things we had not noticed before, but he has the shortcomings which are shared by nearly all critics who have grown up in a generation whose education has been undisciplined and diffuse, and in a country where a serious standard of literary value is difficult to maintain.

Song

By Theodore Spencer

AGAINST the doom of dust
The stones cry out
And the leaves cry out,
The earth cries, "Unjust!"

And I who see your cheek
Wrinkling under my eyes
And death in your eyes
Can find no words to speak,

Because of time flying
And the dark wind
And the speed of the wind
And beauty dying.

From a high white house in Castine, Maine, came "The Little Locksmith," an autobiography as proud and strong and sensitive as the very coast of Maine itself. It is not really an autobiography in the ordinary sense, but a part of every person who has wanted to find, to make, or to dream a finer world. That Katharine Butler Hathaway died on Christmas Eve, 1942, makes her book the more poignant, and our appreciation of it the more profound.

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Perse's Short Poems

ELÓGES AND OTHER POEMS. By St. John Perse. The French text with English translation by Louise Varése and an introduction by Archibald MacLeish. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1944. 177 *pp.* $2.50.

THE poetry of St. John Perse has been praised by T. S. Eliot and Archibald MacLeish in particular. Perse's long poem, "Anabase," was first translated by Eliot. MacLeish says of it here, in his introduction, "*Anabase* is not, like *Elóges,* a personal record. It is a poem of vast dimensions, impersonal as the sea journeys of Homer." In trying to find an English equivalent for the title of the present poems, Louise Varése, discards "eulogies" in favor of "praises," though she finds the latter "lacking in overtones." A quoted letter from Perse, a letter which MacLeish originally translated for *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse,* begins, "You are acquainted . . . with my fierce hatred of literary exoticism." Perse writes in this book of the Antilles and the Tropics in retrospect. He was born on a small coral island in 1889, the son of French Colonials, of a family which had lived in the small islands for generations. His real name, of course, was Alexis St. Leger Leger. He became one of the principal officers of the Third Republic, a great political figure; is now an exile, and at present consultant on French literature in the Library of Congress. The chief sections of the present book are called, in translation, "To Celebrate a Childhood," "Praises," "The Glory of Kings," and "Images for Crusoe."

To begin and end, there are poems "Written on the Door."

The translator is entirely aware that the translator is merely a medium dealing with the actually untranslatable. Her endeavor meets "the unconquerable barrier of language. One can only hope to make breaches in it. Holes to glimpse stars through." She is "on the side of fidelity, and not with the forces of a poem-at-any-price." She acknowledges the aid of the poet and others.

This seems to us distinguished translation, and the work, reflecting somewhat the method of our own imagists of thirty years ago, is vivid and full of atmosphere. With the sound, cadence, and syllabification of the original these poems would, of course, take on an added distinction; but the French original goes side by side with the translation for those who would savor the work to the full. W. R. B.

Fraser Young's Literary Crypt: No. 45

A cryptogram is writing in cipher. Every letter is part of a code that remains constant throughout the puzzle. The solution to Crypt No. 45 *will be found in the next issue.*

FQGK, LQB BKDQMD, QD FTBPHF QL CKPBDNDA VQZK, PDV ZRNDW ZRKO ABQM NGGQBZPC PF ZRKO EJQZK.

—KVGJDV OQJDA.

—*CQSK QL LPGK.*

Answer to Literary Crypt No. 44

HONOR IS VENERABLE TO US BECAUSE IT IS NO EPHEMERIS. IT IS ALWAYS ANCIENT VIRTUE.

—EMERSON.

—*SELF-RELIANCE.*

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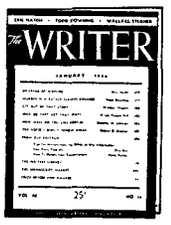

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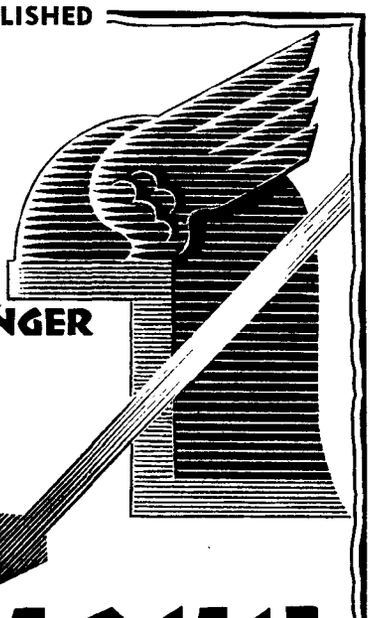

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TO THE SOUTH: RICHER POETRY THAN WE KNOW

(*Continued from page* 11)

expect, but also very deeply from France, Germany, England, and (through Yeats and Joyce) from Ireland. We ourselves have played a part: for if the earlier poets went into ecstasies over Poe (the Swan almost became a Raven!), it is the voice of Whitman which has been heard increasingly since then—witness the fine poems of the Venezuelan Jacinto Fombona-Pachano, to cite one instance from many—; and it goes without saying that T. S. Eliot is hardly less an Ancestor in Mexico City or Lima or Santiago than he is in New Haven or Cambridge. But most importantly, it has drawn its sustenance from beneath, from its own American soil. As the races have mingled, conqueror mixing with the vanquished, so the strong tone of the Indian has colored all this writing. His influence is everywhere.

It is hard for us to imagine what this means because our own experience of the Indian has been so different from that of Latin America. For that matter, our own Indians were different: while they achieved a certain amount of political development in the Five Nations of the Northeast and among the pueblo dwellers of the Southwest, there was never anything in North America comparable to the brilliant civilizations of the Inca and the Aztec. Moreover, our aims were different from those of the *conquistadores*. We were interested in getting the land, and our method was slaughter and segregation; the Spaniards were interested in material conquest too, of course, but they had the further aims of converting the Indians to the Faith and of enslaving them to work the mines, the forests, and the fields. As a result, our Indian is a rarity and, like most rarities, an oddity. His language, arts, and customs have had little effect upon us; we think of him, when at all, touristically —the ritual dances of Arizona and New Mexico, the Micmac guides of eastern Canada, something of Hiawatha and something of Uncas, and a great deal of Buffalo Bill. But in the rest of America this is not so. The Indian was conquered; but he survived and, in a sense, he has conquered the conqueror. Nowhere has he disappeared entirely, and certain countries —Ecuador, for example, and Bolivia— are essentially Indian nations. One has only to read the epic rhapsody "América," by the Bolivian poet Raúl Otero Reiche, to see how true this is: for this is no costume-ball poem like "Hiawatha," but the authentic expression of a still powerful race, intensely conscious of its past greatness and aware of its role in the world's future.

In these countries there exists a flourishing *Indigenista* movement, with poetry composed both in Spanish and in the native tongues. As good an example as any is the poet and novelist Jesús Lara, also a Bolivian, who uses conventional verse forms in such a way that what was familiar suddenly becomes new and strange—the strangeness of the Inca music, the Inca ritual and dance. We are carried back beyond Pizarro; yet we feel that this is no mere archeological evocation, but the celebration of a force that has survived all conquerors so far, and is likely to survive as many more as may come. Lara's book, "Harahuiy harahuicu," has therefore an importance out of all proportion to its modest size. And there are scores of other poets, many of them less conventional in manner, but all of them squarely within the tradition: Alejandro Peralta, for instance, whose poetry owes much to Cummings's experiments with typography; and Emilio Vásquez—slight, frequently rough, but touched with the same strangeness of which I have spoken. In all these poets the Indian speaks confidently and authoritatively, like a man in his own home—which, indeed, is precisely what he is.

Even when it is less overt, the Indian influence is not to be discounted. I do not pretend that every poet has consciously come under it; but am I wrong in seeming to detect it in writers so disparate as that almost Vergilian ecloguist Leopoldo Marechal and the subtle, erudite Eliotine, Bernardo Ortiz de Montellano? Or in Jaime Torres Bodet, whose exquisite verse, so Spanish in texture, has yet a quality that is not Spanish at all, but Mexican? Or in the wild Marxist stream (stream? deluge!)-of-consciousness outpourings of Pablo de Rokha of Chile, no less than in the quieter, more ordered poems of his wife Winétt? Or even in the Europe-turned work of the Peruvian surrealists Carlos Oquendo de Amat, César Moro, and Emilio Adolfo von Westphalen? These are American in tone, for all their dependence upon a score of Old World schools; and in these countries American means Indian.

A less widely spread influence, although it is no less authentically of the land, is the African. From the beginning, the Negro has been a potent force in the popular poetry of certain

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countries, notably Haiti and Cuba, but to some extent also in Puerto Rico, Central America, and sections of countries as far from the Antillean scene as Ecuador, Uruguay, and Brazil. His myths, rites, and rhythms, brought by the first slaves from Africa, have never completely died out; and they have produced a poetry which is like nothing, quite, that we have in English. The nearest thing to it is the Blues: by which I emphatically do not mean the juke-box Blues of Tin Pan Alley manufacture, but the real thing as exemplified, for instance, by the work of Langston Hughes. The characteristic form is the *són*—a dance-poem in short, almost Skeltonic rhythms, exclamatory, rough, frequently menacing, but capable at times of a most moving tenderness. Like all folk-poetry, it is poetry to be sung; it is like many of the old ballads of our own tradition in its use of refrain, antiphonal progression, and repetition. I translate a typical stanza from Nicolás Guillén:

Mayómbè - bómbè - Mayombé!
Sensemayá, the snake
Mayómbè - bómbè - Mayombé!
Sensemayá, doesn't stir
Mayómbè - bómbè - Mayombé!
Sensemayá, the snake
Mayómbè - bómbè - Mayombé!
Sensemayá, he's dead!

Rattle of maracas and the boom of the big drums: the poem is a purely African incantation. But Guillén—the outstanding Negro poet of our time, an artist who would be significant in any time—is much more than a "local-colorist." His books, especially "West Indies Ltd.," and "Sones para turistas y cantos para soldados," are devastating social criticism. In his hands the *són* and its allied folk-forms are weapons that batter and slash and tear. The enemy is the Boss, the exploiter—primarily, of course, the Yankee, whom Guillén knows bitterly as the financier tourist: "With what a tourist swallows / In brandy alone / Anyone else could pay for a room!" But the enemy is also to be found among his own people—the soldier, landlord, foreman, the crushed and exploited who accept their slavery as something somehow due them—and these escape no more easily than the Grace Line slummer from New York.

Less powerful than Guillén, but writing in his manner, are his fellow Cubans Emilio Ballagas, Vicente Gómez Kemp, Regino Pedroso, Ramón Guirao; the Puerto Rican Luis Palés Matos; and the Haitian Jacques Roumain. Of these, curiously, only Pedroso and Roumain are Negroes, and Pedroso is half Chinese; the others are *Negristas,* whites consciously affecting the Negro style. Antillean critics are fond of comparing them to Vachel Lindsay, whose "Congo," like Poe's "The Raven," must sound more convincing in Spanish than I am able to make it sound to myself in English. However that may be, any one of the poets that I have mentioned is a better *Negrista* than Lindsay ever was; and at least one of them, Palés Matos, is as adept as Guillén himself in handling folk-rhythms, although his verse lacks the depth of the great Negro's. These Afro-Antilleans, both black and white, are authoritative exponents of an art that is, in the truest sense, of the people.

And that is my point. From the maracas of Guillén to the recondite speculations of Vicente Huidobro, from the black broodings of Pablo Neruda to the mystical vaudeville of Jorge de Lima, the act of poetry is felt to be a normal act. It is not one of the minor decorative arts, nor is the poet —however difficult, however esoteric —cut off from the people.

I should like to close with a dramatic but by no means extreme example of what I mean. The Loyalist cause in Spain enlisted the sympathy of Latin America's finest artists and poets, and of these no figure is more moving than the late César Vallejo, a Chilean. Although desperately ill—he died in 1937—and unable to take part in the fighting, he hurried to the scene and gave everything he had to the support of the Republic: this was his great book of war poems, "España aparta de mí este cáliz." The first edition was set up and printed by the soldiers of the Army of the East—printed on paper manufactured by the soldiers themselves in the middle of that final, heartbreaking campaign. Before the book could be issued, Catalonia fell to the Fascists (whom, we must always remember, our own blind complacency was abetting) and the entire edition was destroyed by the enemy. What is significant is the fact that to the ordinary campaigning *meliciano* a book of poems was a reality like any other weapon, important enough to justify all the time and pain that it must have cost to publish it in such circumstances. This could not happen in our own country. It could happen anywhere in Latin America.

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Now that the critics have joined in a chorus of praise for *The Moon Was Red* by DANA SAGE ("Really first-class," say *The Herald Tribune, The Post, The Saturday Review*) you may be interested in the inside story.

The Moon Was Red by DANA SAGE started out, back in June, 1943, with an idea for a brand new detective character. He was DONALD O'KEEFE ADAMS III, known as DON O'K south of the Rio Grande. Product of generations of Salem traders, educated at Groton and Harvard, this hemisphere industrialist was Good neighbor No. 1 in the abandoned era B.N.R. (before NELSON ROCKEFELLER.)

That brief profile sold us. So we began to look for a novelist to put DON O'K into a book that would have suspense, excitement, and plenty of inside South American stuff. This wasn't the first time that we had gone a-hunting for the right man to turn an idea into a book. But before this it had always been a non-fiction idea, in a field where acknowledged authorities existed. Finding an accomplished novelist willing to collaborate with an idea-man was a different problem. In fact, the candidate we called said wearily over the telephone, "There's no such thing as a brand new kind of detective. If you'll buy me a drink I'll come down and prove it to you." Half an hour later, he signed the contract.

During the next two months DANA SAGE (both the idea-man and the writing-man lurk behind that monicker) lived, breathed and ate South America. He turned up with a quarter of a million words of notes on customs, superstitions, anthropology, geography, architecture, flora and fauna. He had a dream of a plot. And—he had SANCHO.

SANCHO started out as stooge for DON O'K, secretary, bodyguard, and general utility man. SANCHO was a Lengua Indian; thus he and his boss would be a symbol of hemisphere collaboration. So far, so good. Then along came WINSTON CHURCHILL with a speech in which he said that Basic English would be the international language of the future. DANA SAGE got a brainwave, and SANCHO talks Basic English—the first character in fiction to use it. It turns out to be quite a language. (DRS. OGDEN AND RICHARDS, Basic's inventors, didn't know their own strength.)

Nobody can accuse *us* of that. As soon as we read the finished manuscript, we began to rent housetops from which we could shout: read

THE MOON WAS RED
by Dana Sage
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PUBLISHED BY SIMON AND SCHUSTER

The Old Folks at Home

THE SHAPE OF MEMORY. By Winifred Welles. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1944. 61 *pp.* $2.

Reviewed by PADRAIC COLUM

A JIG TUNE keeps in my mind all day: it is out of "The Shape of Memory," and though not characteristic it has that humorous and heartening quality which is an ingredient in Winifred Welles's poems—

Oh, never so brisk, so merry, so warm,
Had Ellen gone home in all her Decembers,
As then, when her escort, scattering embers,
Encircled their journey with melting snows.
And his smouldering breath,
Though he scared her to death,
Steamed all the chilblains out of her toes.

This quality is notable because it is the other side of a poetry whose essential qualities are revery and compassion. Without its heartening and humorous quality these poems might be purely pensive.

Their devoted editor, Louise Townsend Nicholl, found an appropriate title for them: "The Shape of Memory." Their theme is Remembrance of Things Past—an old dwelling, a bedroom in which an old man lay, a remembered episode, children's companionships—

Under the dark-veined eyelids is a world
Blue as an iris, exquisitely furled,
The flower-shape of memory, rooted deep
In that black lake beneath the first green sleep.
And, like gold seeds of pollen, people there
Float in the half-lit, nightfall-colored air.

The poet who deals with memory should have wit enough to point up the private significance to something universal. Winifred Welles has this wit in abundance—

And wit to pour into one short event
Ridges, range, or ocean, coast or continent.

The crow that a boy has brought into a lighted room, having an omened ancientry, is "the Hebrew among birds," and in "Emily to Emily" a significant relationship is wittily stated—

Immortals both, yet neither one
Despised her human day—
Oh, exquisite Miss Dickinson,
Oh, valiant Miss Brontë!

It is the compassion in so many of these poems that assures them a place in our memory. Blake told us that The Caterpillar upon the leaf reminds you of your mother's grief, but caterpillars remind this poet of her own grief. They are not faceless for her—

Silent, all purposeful, their sombre eye
Veiled with their dream, all resolute to keep
Their wistful, immemorial pact with sleep.

And how imaginative are the lines that tell their destiny—

No one would dare to say
Who once looks in those faces, streaked and queer
That without woe they seal themselves away
From light and earth, or that they have no fear
Of winter, or of winter's close that brings
The burden and the ecstacy of wings.

"The Shape of Memory" is not only a memorial of persons and places, but of a lapsed folk life. It is not only the tribe of Mickey McGarrity, Ellen McGory, and Tim O'Tool who is departed, but the people who built the old dwellings and barns, who tended the old orchards, whose names are on the old graves. The New England land knows them no more. About their places roam a queer people, the remnant of that loved race. Like the antiquary of her poem, Winifred Welles, "history-haunted, ancestry-enchanted" summons this remnant and they live for us with all their oddnesses—the lunatic who was "prompt as a violet in his season," Mrs. Peabody "exercising her private wild cat," Clark O'Larr musing on the fragments that are himself, Eliza Leavy who was "the audience for all disease," Miss Fitch's husband, Mrs. Minnie Pitcher who was on her knees scrubbing on week days and on her knees praying on Sundays, and her son Nob who would come home to her with a bottle in one hand and a lily in the other, the parson who roams through the burying grounds—

Not of man's soul, taut and extended
From star to star,
But of man's flesh, begun and ended
He keeps calendar.

"The Shape of Memory" with its revery and compassion, its wit and spiritedness, is a book of American poems that will remain a possession—a distinctive contribution. What a loss it would have been if these poems had been let remain in manuscript. We owe a debt to Louise Townsend Nicholl for bringing about their publication and arranging and introducing them so sympathetically.

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Ballad of Concord Bridge

By Alfred Kreymborg

IT wasn't much of a bridge they held, the men of Concord town:
Wooden and short it stood all strain until it tumbled down.

Nor is it a bridge to brag about along the new highway:
The lasting stone we speed across, the concrete Everyday.

Compare that shade with our sunlight and bridges round the ball:
The mighty spans, the living steel—It wasn't a bridge at all!

But let us stop awhile and take our memory in hand,
Not toward the battle farmers fought to save our native land,

But rather to a pair of men who looked upon the pace
We hurry through and shook their heads—I mean the human race.

The first was like a human star who scans the Everywhere,
Observing things in motion with such essential care

He let no present whelm the past with cries of sudden fame,
But gave an arch its place in time and wrote another name

Among the bridges of the world to where the Oversoul
Finds no ending even when the human race is whole.

This was a man who loved Concord and knew our lives are won
Not in a rush but step by step—His name is Emerson.

But Concord had a wilder man who played the hermit then:
A busy mole who loved the woods and shunned all common men:

Whose piercing eyes and mind beheld the wonder of the trees,
And never read "the Times" at all, but "the Eternities."

But even he, this radical who paid no income tax
But seized another pen to write upon another axe,

Hewed down more evil in our land and raised more freedom high
Than any man who moves in grooves and dies respectably.

Although young Thoreau knew the Bridge but rarely left the Pond
In which he spent his fiery days and felt the night respond,

He said more things for Liberty from Nature down to man
Than we shall ever gather in our solitary plan.

And now these men, the hermit and the sage who shook his head
Over his friend, are quoted and they aren't quoted dead.

For one beheld in living what the other's wisdom found:
The Bridge of Concord everywhere, the human rainbow sound!

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	*Crime, Place, and Sleuth*	*Summing Up*	*Verdict*
DEAD ERNEST *Alice Tilton* (Norton: $2.)	Two sinister characters deliver corpse-laden "deep freeze" to Leonidas Witherall, recondite Mass. amateur sleuth, and the fun begins.	Typically harum-scarum Witherall wackiness, packed with eccentric people, mad dashing around, and considerable thrills, all expertly put together.	Highly diverting
THE CLOCK STRIKES TWELVE *Patricia Wentworth* (Lippincott: $2.)	Theft of valuable blueprints followed by mysterious death of English war-material magnate. Miss Silver quietly clears up all.	Romance, mystery, and murder satisfactorily mingled—for those who like their thrills pleasantly diluted with family chatter and emotional entanglements.	Nice
MURDER A MILE HIGH *Elizabeth Dean* (Crime Club: $2.)	Czech tenor found slain in vestibule of rococo mansion in Western ghost town. Lively school-marm precipitates effective climax.	Interesting background—although not unfamiliar to addicts. Two "old timers" supply comedy. Naval officer sleuth and fiancee do able sleuthing job.	Ingratiating

PERSONALS

ADVERTISEMENTS will be accepted in this column for things wanted or unwanted; personal services to let or required; literary or publishing offers not easily classified elsewhere; miscellaneous items appealing to a special and intelligent clientèle; jobs wanted, houses or camps for rent, tutoring, traveling companions, ideas for sale; communications of a decorous nature, expressions of opinion (limited to fifty lines). Ads of a strictly personal nature are limited to an exchange of correspondence, thus also enabling an exchange of reference. Rates: 10 cents per word including signature. Count two additional words for Box and Number. Payment in full must be received eight days in advance of publication. We forward all mail received in answer to box numbers. Address Personal Dept., Saturday Review, 25 West 45th Street, New York 19, N. Y.

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(*Continued on page* 34)

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PERSONALS

(*Continued from page* 33)

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BOOK LOVER and public speaker invites letters from ladies from the vicinity of Ohio. Box 420-J.

INTELLIGENT WOMAN, hotel business, speaks French, Russian, seeks correspondence of men, women, fortyish, who like dancing, traveling, music. Box 421-J.

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NEW ENGLAND SUMMER CAMP position desired by English professor and wife. AMC members. Box 423-J.

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PROFESSIONAL GENTLEMAN seeks an unbranded, interesting, feminine correspondence. Box 425-J.

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PERSONALS

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LATIN-AMERICAN gentleman, tall, youthful, fortyish, spiritually isolated by recent arrival big city for extended period, seeks mail friendship with sensitive, attractive young lady, not over 30. Box 442-J.

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A YOUNG MAN (with references) desires correspondence with a winsome girl who likes the fine arts and country living. Box 437-J.

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IS THERE A Stephen looking for this Mary? Box 440-J.

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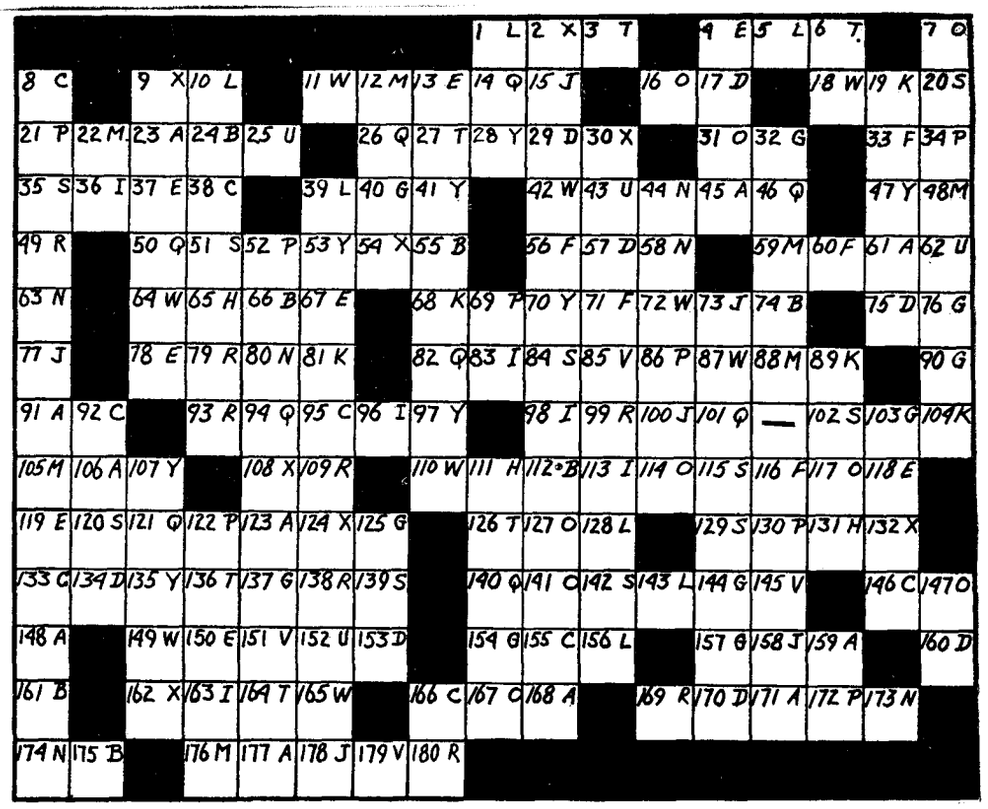
The Crostics Club

MRS. SAMUEL W. BRADSTREET, now of Palm Springs, Calif., writes of the family bond DCs have created in puzzling. She hasn't missed one since the beginning. Gradually her doctor husband, driven to the desert because of ill health, has joined the circle to work with the reference books they were able to bring along, placed in a cosy corner dedicated to DCs. Their married daughter, Elizabeth B. Walsh, Editor of Publications at Middlebury College, Vt., who introduced her mother to them, continues their discussions cross country by mail. Commenting further on DC associations evoked, Mrs. Bradstreet relates that while attending recently the graduation exercises at California Tech., she found herself smiling, not at what the speaker, Dr. Milliken, was saying, but at the memory of Mrs. Milliken's letter of protest to me (in re a definition I gave of a term in physics), "I have access to a certain physicist," etc. Adding that Kenneth Roberts is one of their favorite authors, she concluded: "It is high time for him to be getting out a new book. Here we are in the desert, our tongues hanging out, literally, in anticipation of the Roberts' fare our homesick hearts yearn for—his juicy New England food, bottomless bogs, marrow-freezing cold, and lanky 'Way-Daoun-Easterners'. And what do we find? He too has become a DC addict."

Another puzzler from the beginning is Mrs. Samuel P. Capen, wife of the President of Buffalo University, "a learned man as all University Presidents should be," she writes, though when a tough place leads her to ask his help, she adds naively, "50-50 whether he's any help or not, but it's a friendly gesture."

A newcomer to DCs is Mrs. John K. Mitchell, Bellingham, Washington. She started in a state of frenzy over those errors that crept in when the Puzzle Editor was home ill. I hope that she'll regain her faith in us and pacify a husband who is a bit quizzical of neglected dishes, meals, and the baby, over what he terms puzzles for the "indolent intellectual." May he catch the contagion!

Mrs. Kenneth McKenzie, Princeton, N. J., commenting on Prof. Kinne's "whimwham for a goose's bridle and a waylay for meddlers," writes that under similar circumstances her mother used to say, "They are layovers for meddlers and crutches for lame ducks," and she asks if anyone can give the source of either or both. Right at my elbow is a card from Steven Byington giving just the information she wants, but too lengthy for this article. Write to him at Ballard Vale, Mass. I'm sure he'll be glad to share his boundless knowledge with other members of our DC fraternity. E. S. K.



Double-Crostics: No. 527

By ELIZABETH S. KINGSLEY

DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle you must guess twenty-five words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. The key letters in the squares are for convenience, indicating to which word in the definitions each letter in the diagram belongs. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Authority for spelling and definitions is Webster's New International Dictionary (1940 edition).

The solution of last week's *Double Crostic* will be found on page 31 of this issue.

DEFINITIONS

A. The couplet of "The Canterbury Tales."

B. In a state of restless activity (3 wds.)

C. A frightful goblin portending misfortune.

D. Sensibility.

E. A turncoat.

F. To punish; thrash.

G. Having a decided flavor (comp.)

H. Tragedy of Euripides (Greek Myth.)

I. First name of favorite American authoress (1832-88).

J. The goddess of Childbirth (Roman Relig.)

K. Couples; joins.

L. To exact by way of a levy or fine.

M. Disreputable.

N. Under the most favorable circumstances (2 wds.)

O. The battle that freed Ecuador from Spanish rule (May 24, 1822).

P. Presented to use in another form.

Q. Ostensibly conspicuous.

R. Notable American composer (1861-1935).

S. Members of a Russian Social-Democratic party.

T. Equality (Law).

U. The rough, often scaly exterior of bark.

V. Benumbed (poetic form).

W. Commits a breach of; violates.

X. Ritualistic drama peculiar to Japan (2 wds.)

Y. Droplike.

WORDS

61 45 148 123 106 171 177 91 159 23 168

161 112 66 55 24 74 175

133 146 95 38 155 92 8 166

134 17 75 57 153 160 170 29

119 150 37 118 78 13 4 67

56 33 60 116 71

76 144 125 40 154 103 32 90 137 157

131 65 111

98 113 83 36 96 163

15 77 100 178 73 158

81 19 104 89 68

156 10 39 143 128 5 1

12 22 59 176 105 88 48

80 63 44 58 174 173

141 7 114 167 31 147 117 127 16

52 130 172 34 21 69 86 122

14 46 82 94 140 26 101 121 50

169 99 49 109 93 180 138 79

102 120 139 20 51 115 129 142 35 84

27 136 3 164 126 6

25 43 152 62

151 179 85 145

110 87 11 42 72 64 18 165 149

124 108 2 162 132 9 30 54

107 53 47 135 70 97 41 28

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